

*Studies in Syriac Literature**

by **Matti Moosa**

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Prepared by Robert Bedrosian, 2011

Matti Moosa's

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Introduction and Historiography of the Subject

The systematic study of Syriac Literature and sciences and related subjects began in Europe at the close of the seventeenth century. Eastern writers, whether of early or recent periods, whether Syrians or not, did not concern themselves with the scholarly study of Syriac Literature until recently, when the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch, Mar Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, published his comprehensive work entitled *Kitab al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur (The Unstrung Pearls)*, or, as he gives the title in French, *Histoire des Sciences et de la Litterature Syriaque*, in 1943. This work was republished in 1956. An evaluation of this book will be given later.

Even concerning the art of poetry, which is considered one of the Syrians' foremost literary achievements, there is no evidence that Syrian writers have done any systematic work. The oldest work on Syriac poetry, however, was first composed by Severus Bar Shabbo, metropolitan of the Monastery of Mar Matta, near Mosul, Iraq, who lived in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Unfortunately, this work has been lost, and we know about it only from the author's reference to it in the fourth chapter of the second part of *The Book of Treasures*. From this treatise we know that this bishop gave a summary of the principles of Syriac religious poetry, its authors, and the dates of its introduction into church rituals. Another treatise on Syriac poetry, composed in Arabic by P. D. Gabrieleum Cardahi the Maronite, appeared in Rome in 1875, under the title *al-Kanz al-Thamin (Liber Thesauri De Arte Poetica Syrorum)*. In this treatise Cardahi explained the meters of Syriac poetry, adding short biographies of Syrian poets with specimens of their poetry. But he did not discuss the development of Syriac poetry or even give a historical account of its development.

In 1896, the Syrian Roman Catholic bishop of Damascus, Monsignor Dawud (David), published his two volume work in Arabic, *al-Lum'a al-Shahiya (Grammaire de la Langue Arameenne)*; at the end of the second volume he devoted a chapter to Syriac poetry and prosody, mentioning the names and works of the most famous Syrian poets. Although the writer had attempted to fill a gap in the studies of Syriac poetry and made a good start in this direction, yet his attempt is far from being complete or perfect. The most recent attempt to study the different aspects of Syriac literature, however, was initiated by Rev. Paulos Behnam, the present Syrian Orthodox Archbishop of Iraq, who wrote in his Arabic magazine *al-Mashriq* (published in Mosul, 1946-1953) a series of articles on Syrian culture. In these as well as many other articles, Archbishop Behnam studied critically the origins and the development of the Syriac language and literature, and evaluated the opinions of Western scholars who had written on the subject. Unfortunately, he did not continue this commendable endeavor. In 1949, two Egyptian professors issued *Syriac Literature* from its beginning to the Muslim conquest; but it is

merely an uncritical summary of Western works on the subject. Moreover, the fact that the work is unannotated makes it difficult for the reader to evaluate the opinions of the authors. In fact, the two writers frequently reach faulty conclusions and commit many errors.

In the West the learned French scholar, Eusebius Renaudot (1646-1720) was first to realize the significance of the study of Syriac literature. He must be credited with introducing the study of the Syriac church, its fathers, and its liturgies to the Western world. Thirty years before the learned Maronite prelate Joseph Assemani published the first volume of his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* in 1719, Renaudot had finished his translation and annotation of a great number of Syriac liturgies, but this work, unfortunately was never published. Until his death in 1720, Renaudot waited patiently for the Syriac characters which the French Minister of Finance, Colbert, promised to furnish for the publication of his work. Assemani would probably not have achieved such wide fame if the work of Renaudot had been published. According to J. B. Chabot, the works of Renaudot are more comprehensive and informative than the works of Assemani (1).

In spite of his fame as an eminent scholar and his popularity among Western students of Syriac literature, and in spite of the fact that four volumes of his *Bibliotheca Orientalis* are the most exhaustive works ever written on Syriac studies, Assemani may be considered a biased source, unreliable in his translation of some Syriac texts. According to William Wright, Assemani tried hard in the first volume of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* to prove that Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) was not a "Monophysite"—that is, he did not believe in the "one incarnate nature" of Jesus Christ—but in the second volume he gave up this attempt in despair (2). But if we realize that Jacob of Edessa was obviously an adherent of the dogma of the "one incarnate nature" as is unanimously affirmed by Eastern as well as Western writers, we may reach the conclusion that Assemani attempted to depict the works and belief of Jacob of Edessa with a Chalcedonian coloring.

Assemani's prejudice against the Syrian Orthodox writers is not hard to explain. His unjustified hatred of the celebrated Philoxenus of Mabug is but an example. We have it on the authority of William Wright that "Assemani never misses an opportunity of reviling him" (3). He called him "*Scelestissimus haereticus*" (*B.O.*, ii. II) ("a most wicked heretic"); "*flagitiosissimus homo*" (p. 12) ("a thoroughly shameful man"); and added "*ecclesiam Dei tanquam feras aper devastavit*" (p. 18) ("he devastated the church of God like a wild boar"). But he was obliged at the end to own (*B.O.*, II, 20) "*scripsit Syriace, si quis alius, elegantissime, atque admodum inter optimos hujusce linguae scriptores a Jacobo Edesseno collocari meruit*" ("he wrote Syriac as elegantly as any other man, and so deserved to be classified by Jacob of Edessa among the finest writers of this language").

Furthermore, Assemani's infidelity in translating has been proven by Rev. Henry Burgess in *The Repentance of Nineveh by Ephraim Syrus* (London, 1853). Assemani apparently twisted parts of the text of St. Ephraim on the repentance of Nineveh in accordance with his Roman Catholic prejudice. In this regard, Rev. Burgess relates that "the sentiment of Ephraem is simple enough, and quite scriptural, but Assemani gives it a turn purely papistical, by as gross an abuse of words as perhaps was ever perpetrated in controversy" (4). Burgess adds that "This specimen of infidelity will justify the animadversion we have often felt it our duty to make on the Latin translation of Ephraem and to show how impossible it is to get at his (Ephraem's) real opinions by any Catholic medium" (5).

Following the work of Assemani, we have Gustav Bickell's *Conspectus rei Litterariae Syrorum* (Munster, 1871), which is a brief analysis of the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* with some editing. William Wright's *Syriac Literature* (London, 1894) originally appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1887); a few brief additions were made for its posthumous publication in book form.

La Littérature Syriaque by Rubens Duval (Paris, 1889), covers in detail the history of Syriac Literature down to the thirteenth century. Its organization, comprehensiveness, and ease of style afford the reader an excellent insight into the subject.

Early Eastern Christianity, by F. C. Burkitt (London, 1904), consists mainly of lectures on the early Syrian Church of Edessa, but touches upon some aspects of Syriac literature. The author seems to be confused about the true history of Edessa and the Syriac names of its Kings, which he erroneously makes Arabic.

Theodor Noldeke's *Aramaische Literatur* (Leipzig, 1906) and Brockelmann's *Die Syrische und die Christliche Aramaische Literatur* (Leipzig, 1907) are rather brief accounts of Syriac literature.

Still another major work is *Geschichte der Syrischen Literatur* by Anton Baumstark (Bonn, 1922). The author has meticulously provided comprehensive, copious references and notes. The information given by the author, however, is so condensed that it would be difficult for the non-specialist to find his way through it. Moreover, the book is more factual than analytical.

J.B. Chabot, in addition to *Les Langues et la Litterature Arameenne* (see notes) also wrote a short book, without notes, entitled *La Litterature Syriaque* (Paris, 1935), in which he discussed the development of Syriac Literature until the thirteenth century.

Mention should also be made here of George Graf's *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur*, published in the Vatican City, 1944. The second volume of this work contains most of the writings of the Syrians, as well as Coptic writers who wrote in Arabic or translated Syriac works into that language. This volume also includes the manuscripts containing the Arabic writings of Syrian writers, with copious description and commentaries on each of them. This work is most comprehensive, and highly valuable for the study of the Christian literature of the Syrian Church after the Arab conquest.

The study of Syriac literature, then, originated in the East but was brought to its fullest development by Western writers. As Assemani, an Easterner by birth and tradition, used his important knowledge to shape Western ideas on Syriac literature, so today it is the Westerners following his lead who have formulated the views generally accepted in the East.

It is against this rather tenuous, uncertain background, that Patriarch Barsoum projects his *al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur*. We can justly appraise the author's historical account only by acknowledging its indebtedness to earlier scholarship, yet recognizing its uniqueness in an exaggerated nationalistic tone and in an unremitting accumulation of compendious, detailed information.

Patriarch Barsoum (1887-1957) came to prominence in 1918 when he was designated Bishop of Syria, and after World War I he achieved recognition not only as a man of religion, but also as a scholar and as a representative of the Syrians' national interests. In 1933, he was formally elected Patriarch of Antioch, and showed himself an active head of the Church until his death. Despite his numerous responsibilities within the Church, Barsoum devoted much of his time to writing on the religion, languages and history of his people. *Al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur*, then, was not the solitary work of an unlearned Eastern Patriarch, but part of the considerable output of a man thoroughly conversant with his subject.

What purpose did Barsoum have in writing this book? We may begin to answer such a question by considering its title. The French title is quite misleading: *Histoire des Sciences et de La Litterature Syriaque* clearly suggests that the book resembles the Western studies of Syriac literature. We should prefer the Arabic title, *Kitab al-Lu'lu' al-Manthur fi Tarikh al-'Ulum wa al-'Adab al-Suryaniya* (*The Unstrung Pearls of the History of Syriac Sciences and Literature*). The metaphorical implication of this title is evident: the work aims to present information which lies outside the scope of Western studies. The Introduction, written not only in Arabic but also in French and Syriac, indicates more precisely the nature of the work. Barsoum states that he hopes to fill the existing gaps in the knowledge of Syriac literature, and to pay tribute to the language of his church. He notes that at the beginning of the present century there commenced a revival of interest in the history of science and literature,

but adds that "Aramean science and literature" have received insufficient treatment from Western writers. Duval, Wright, Baumstark, and Chabot have, he says, "devoted their attention to what they recognize as science and literature" in the general sense (but, it is implied, they have passed over the extensive body of sacred literature in Syriac). Also, Barsoum notes, of these writers only Baumstark gives any consideration to Syriac Literature after the end of the thirteenth century.

Barsoum proposes to treat here several subjects omitted by earlier writers, including calligraphy, versification, the rites of the church, geographical sketches of Syrian cities, historical documents, the history of literature from 1290 to the present, and works and manuscripts previously unknown. In another chapter he summarizes the works of those Orientalists who have preserved Syrian culture, and criticizes writers who have sought to lessen the influence of the Syrians' knowledge.

The immediate audience for which Barsoum wrote includes two groups: historiographers and philologists, who may seek more knowledge of Syriac literature; and the faithful members of the Syrian church, whose national feeling he hopes "may be reinvigorated in their ancestral spirit." Additional evidence of the restricted audience to which the book appeals lies in the assertion that it "treats only Western Syrian scholars and writers, to the exclusion of the Eastern Syrians (Nestorians) and what is known of the meager culture of the Malkites and the Maronites." For Barsoum, the prospect of a fruitful and beneficial "social result," the resurrection of the cultural heritage of the Syriac-speaking community, is full recompense for the difficulties and material expenses of preparing this work, which represents the "fruit of our untiring labor over a period covering nearly a third of a century of our Episcopal and patriarchal life." Structurally, the book may be divided into three distinct sections. The first, containing thirty-one chapters, concerns the religious literature and other related writings extant in Syriac. After introductory chapters on the Syriac language and literature, the expositions on Syrian centers of learning and libraries, Barsoum treats in detail the Christian literature which has survived, including liturgies, the books of rituals used in the church, and the lives of great men of the Church. The second part presents biographies of 292 prominent Syrian writers; fifty-six of these have not previously been cited by Western writers. In the third part are appendices giving the names of Syrian calligraphers, meanings of foreign terms in the book, geographical names, lists of monasteries, an index of biographical references, and lists of saints.

Judged in terms of its author's stated purpose, *al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur* must be considered highly successful. In fact, it was received enthusiastically not only by those members of the Syriac-speaking community for whom it was written, but also by Nestorian and Muslim scholars. Viscount Philip de Tarrazi, a Roman Catholic writer, offered this judgment:

al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur is indeed a very valuable work which deserves respect and consideration. Its learned author has enumerated the compositions of the famous writers and scientists from ancient times down to the present, in greater detail than any author before his time. His opening chapters demonstrate his thorough knowledge of his subject and his precision... he has filled a great gap in the history of our literature and sciences, which have adorned the Christian East for many centuries... (6)

The widespread appeal of *al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur* for Eastern readers may readily be understood, for in approach and method it closely resembles other Eastern scholarly works on similar subjects. Especially, we may compare the work of Barsoum with the four-volume history of Arabic literature of Jurji Zaydan, *Kitab Tarikh 'Adab al-Lugha al-'Aratiya* (Cairo, 1911), and with K. L. Istarjian's *Tarikh al-thaqafa wa al-adab al-armani (History of Armenian Culture and Literature)* (Mosul, 1954).

Zaydan, observing that no Eastern writer before him has undertaken such a task, seeks to relate the Arabs' literature to their political history; to depict the growth and decline of their sciences; to give biographies of the leading figures of Arabic sciences and literature, together with pertinent bibliographical material; and to

categorize the books extant in Arabic according to their subjects. While Zaydan presents his material largely within a chronological framework, Barsoum focuses on the types of Syriac literature, particularly compositions of a religious character. Yet both works draw extensively on biographical material, and both are primarily encyclopedic in nature, though Zaydan's is wider in scope. In general, the straightforward style in which Zaydan writes is more fluent than that of Barsoum, whose syntax is sometimes involved, and whose language is often metaphorical.

Istarjian seems in his history of Armenian literature to have a purpose rather like that expressed by Barsoum in the Introduction to *al-Lu' Lu' al-Manthur*. Like Barsoum, Istarjian is intensely proud of the cultural traditions of his people. The periods which the two men cover are nearly identical, but while Barsoum limits his discussion to religious literature, Istarjian also deals with secular literature, approaching his subject through a consideration of literary genres. Nevertheless Istarjian, too, is concerned primarily with presenting biographical material and his work, like *al-Lu' Lu' al-Manthur*, is factual rather than analytical.

Thus, the work of Patriarch Barsoum is wholly consistent with the prevailing tradition of Eastern scholarship. This is not to say, however, that Eastern scholars concern themselves solely with the accumulation of factual evidence. Indeed, an excellent contemporary work of 'Anis al-Makdisi, *al-Ittijahat al-'Adabiya fi al-'Alam al-'Arabi al-Hadith (Literary Trends in the Modern Arab World)* (Beirut, 1963), reflects their growing interest in interpretative literary scholarship. Al-Makdisi discusses Arabic literature of the twentieth century not in terms of its types, but in terms of its political, social, and aesthetic significance. From a Western viewpoint, it may be argued that Barsoum writes in an unscholarly manner. Perhaps we can more readily comprehend the merits and defects of his work by comparing it with that of Rubens Duval, *La Litterature Syriaque*.

Duval provides a historical account of the origins, development, and decline of Syriac literature, and adds brief biographical sketches of the leading Syrian writers. He takes his account only to the end of the thirteenth century, while Barsoum offers much information on the writers from that time to the present. Duval, by adopting a chronological approach, and by considering within the scope of his work the literary activity of both Eastern and Western Syrians, succeeds more fully in placing Syriac literature in its historical context. Neither writer attempts genuine criticism of Syriac literature; Duval turns his attention to its subjects and external forms, while Barsoum enumerates but does not evaluate the works of Syrian writers. Finally, we may note, Duval quotes at length, but carefully, from the work of earlier scholars; Barsoum too frequently presents evidence without identifying its source. It is evident, then, that the Western reader must accept *al-Lu' Lu' al-Manthur* on its own terms, as the work of an Eastern scholar writing for an Eastern audience. He must also bear in mind that Barsoum is the Patriarch of Antioch, the head of the Syrian Church, and that his dominant attitude is one of pride in the literary achievements of the Church Fathers; indeed, this must be his attitude if he is to fulfill his purpose.

To be sure, this pride often leads to undue exaggeration, particularly of the antiquity of the Syrians' language and the greatness of their literature. Barsoum does not document convincingly his identification of Syriac with Aramaic nor does he furnish sufficient proof that Christ and the Apostles spoke Syriac. His dogmatic assertion that Syriac Literature rivals that of the Greeks seems all the more unpalatable because it is made without reference to any clear standard of judgment. One finds it difficult to accept the statement that the Syriac books now extant are the oldest in the world, and impossible to believe that the library of the monastery of the Syrians in Egypt is the most ancient in the world. In other instances Barsoum gives us good reason to call into question his reliability both as a scholar and as a judge of literature. His declaration that the *Pshitto* was produced by Christianized Jews in the first century, for example, may be sound, but the author does not offer substantiation. In his discussion of early Syriac literature, he quite erroneously assigns the composition of the *Book of Tobit* to the fifth century B.C., and again offers no evidence to support his contention. He praises St. Ephraim, Jacob of Edessa, and Bar Hebraeus, often excessively, at the expense of other important writers such as Bar Daysan and

Aphrahat. His treatment of the main themes of Syriac poetry is somewhat marred by his vague definition of satire. Finally, by centering his attention largely upon the Christian literature which the Syrians produced, Barsoum minimizes the importance of their role as translators.

Despite these faults, the work of Patriarch Barsoum has significant value for student of Syriac literature. Unlike his Western predecessors, he does not depend heavily on the work of Assemani, but draws much information from the Syriac manuscripts surviving in churches and monasteries throughout the Middle East, and from other original sources. The wider range of first-hand material available to Barsoum generally does not lead him to conclusions at odds with those drawn by Western scholars, but frequently enriches his presentation of factual information. Wright, for example, in his biographical sketch of Bar Hebraeus, cites only the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* and Bar Hebraeus' own writings; Barsoum furnishes additional evidence from the metrical biography of Bar Hebraeus and his brother, by Gabriel of Bartali.

The chief significance of *al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur*, however, lies not in its additions to our knowledge concerning major figures in Syriac literature, but in its treatment of topics which Western writers have not considered. Barsoum has given us here a thorough and illuminating exposition of the art of calligraphy. His discussion of the rites of the Church takes us into an area which has not been explored in other studies of Syriac literature. The consideration of the various types of church music gives us an all too brief insight into what may quite properly be regarded as one of the highest forms of literary expression sought by the Syrians. This part of the work is clearly derived in part from ancient sources, about which Barsoum is unfortunately not explicit. The informative discussion of Syriac liturgies appears to be original, rather than derivative; Barsoum indicates in this section that he has read both Renaudot and Michael the Great, but because of his life in the Church he is thoroughly familiar with the practice of the liturgy, and in fact has even read seventy-four of these liturgies himself. His catalogue of liturgies is far more extensive than any compiled by Western scholars; to Philoxenus of Mabug, for example, he attributes certainly two liturgies, and tentatively another, whereas Wright cites only one, and that on the authority of Renaudot and Assemani (7).

Western writers seem accustomed to remark disparagingly that the Syrians devoted themselves largely to the writing of Christian literature, and to pass over this literature rather quickly; as a result, their view of Syriac Literature is incomplete. It is equally true, however, that *al-Lu'Lu' al-Manthur*, on account of its preoccupation with the Christian writings, presents an inaccurate picture of the whole of Syrian literature. Those who wish general knowledge of the Syriac language and literature will no doubt profit most from the treatments of these subjects by Duval and Baumstark. Those who seek more detailed knowledge should find the work of Patriarch Barsoum of immeasurable importance.

The development of Syriac Literature may be divided, in terms of its general characteristics and literary merit, into three stages. The first period, extending from the pre-Christian era to the eighth century A.D., is represented both by the few surviving pagan works and by the far more extensive Christian literature. The latter half of this period may be regarded as the golden age of Syriac literature. The production of native religious literature by the luminaries of the Syrian church was carried on side by side with the translation of Greek philosophy into Syriac.

The second period, lasting from the eighth to the close of the thirteenth century, coincides largely with the time of the Arabs' domination of Syria and Iraq. Although the Syrians of this period created many original works in a wide range of fields, their most important literary activity was the transmission of Greek philosophy and medicine into Arabic, without which the retransmission of much of ancient learning into Europe, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, could not have been accomplished.

The third period, which extends from the thirteenth century to the present time, is commonly considered the age of the decline of Syriac literature. After many centuries of Arab rule, the Syrians saw their native language replaced to a considerable extent by Arabic. Nevertheless, despite their limited range of themes and the

restricted nature of their audience, Syrian writers have continued to produce a sizable body of indigenous literature, in the same beautiful language used by their predecessors for two thousand years or more.

Syriac Literature of the Pre-Christian Era

Western scholars have generally assumed that Syriac Literature first came into existence with the beginning of the great Christian movement of the Syrian church, about the start of the third century. This is rather a dangerous assumption, however, in view not only of the highly polished state of development which the Syriac language had attained at that time, but also of the non-Christian literature which has come down to us from the same period. Indeed, we shall shortly adduce evidence that the Syriac language served as the vehicle for literature quite some time before the birth of Christ. Rubens Duval has argued that, in its entirety, Syriac Literature ensued from the great religious movement in the East, and that it is therefore a wholly Christian literature. In accounting for its origin, Duval is careful to deny the existence of any connection between this literature and the writing which preceded the Christian movement. Duval acknowledges Mesopotamia as the birthplace of Syrian literature, but denies that the nation possessed any genuine national literature of its own. If there had been any national culture in Mesopotamia, he argues, either it would have been preserved by tradition or it would have left some trace in the Christian era. The alternative possibility that Syriac Literature was an indigenous product is dismissed with the assertion that it "was not the genius creation of a nation which developed progressively, or which possessed continuous tradition" (8). In correlating the rise of Syriac Literature with the beginning of the Christian movement in the East, Duval expresses the same opinion as Ernest Renan more than half a century earlier. Renan, however, while conceding the importance of the Mesopotamian religious movement to the development of Syriac literature, suggests the possibility of a connection between this literature and Chaldean learning:

It has been previously established that Chaldea possessed an indigenous pagan literature before the time of Christianity. Syria proper and the northern part of Mesopotamia do not appear, it is true, to have participated actively in the movement of Chaldean studies; but one cannot imagine that they remained totally dissociated from it. It is remarkable that the most ancient writings whose titles have come down to us were all produced by the Chaldeans living under the Sassanid rule. The idea of writing in the Aramaic language on Christian themes would have occurred naturally to a people who already possessed works in their native tongue on all sorts of subjects (9).

These men and others who have followed their lead may be correct in maintaining that Syriac literature, as we know it today, is the product of the great religious movement of the Syrian church. This judgment, however, does not eliminate the fact that the Syrians had a national literature before they were Christianized. Indeed, it is inconceivable that a nation like Syria, which had a highly polished language centuries before the Christian era, should have been barren of literature for so long a time. If we are to accept the views of these authorities, we must find a rational and plausible explanation for the sudden eruption of the Syrians' religious literature. Such literary ability must have had its origins in the past, quite possibly in Chaldea or Babylon, as has been affirmed by Bar Daysan in his *Laws of the Countries* (10). Surely, too, there must have been a link between the Syrians' pagan literature and that of the Christian era, a link which now is probably lost. The most logical explanation for this loss is that, after becoming Christians, the Syrians destroyed the literary works of their forefathers, condemning them as worthless in comparison with the salvation they received from their new faith. The continuity of Syriac Literature from the pagan era is also demonstrated by the pagan literature developed in the city of Harran, south of Edessa, which remained the center of pagan religion and culture even after the Islamic conquest of Syria and Iraq. The famous Thabit ibn Qurrah of Harran, in his private Syriac writings (now lost)

related how paganism in Harran was particularly distinguished by its resistance to Christianity. Thanks to Bar Hebraeus, who cites Thabit in his *Ecclesiastical History*, this statement of his is preserved for us: "By God's help our fathers remained firm in their belief despite persecution, while many others surrendered. This blessed city has heroically stood firm against the teachings of the Nazarene" (11).

Antiquity has preserved for us the most remarkable literary work in the Aramaic language, the famous story of 'Ahiqar. 'Ahiqar, the minister of the Assyrian King Sennacherib, was reputed for his wisdom and ethics. Several versions of this legend in Aramaic, Arabic, Armenian, Ethiopian, Old Turkish, Greek and Slavonic were edited, translated into English, and published jointly by F. C. Conybeare, J. Rendel Harris and Agnes Smith Lewis in 1913 (12).

In his exhaustive introduction to this work, Rendel Harris has brilliantly discussed the origin of the legend and its parallels in the tales of the "Thousand and One Nights," the Qur'an (in the person of Luqman), the apocryphal Book of Tobit, the proverbs of Solomon and the legends of Aesop. He also analyzed and compared the different versions of this legend; here we shall be concerned with the Aramaic version, which is of great importance to this subject.

According to Harris, some Aramaic papyri whose extraordinary antiquity ranks them with the oldest known Biblical documents were discovered on the island of the Elephantine, just below the first Cataract of the Nile. Among these ancient documents was a series of papyrus fragments which related to the literature of 'Ahiqar. These papyri were edited and published by Professor Sachau (13).

After thorough study of the papyri, Professor Sachau was inclined to date this work back to the new-Babylonian Kingdom, which followed the fall of Assyria in 603 B.C. His final suggestion that the legend of Ahiqar was written between 550 and 450 B.C. does not eliminate the possibility that it is of much earlier date. The importance of the legend, however, is that it may be considered the oldest literary monument of the Aramaic language. This Aramaic, which is the same as that of the Books of Ezra and Nehemia of the Old Testament, must not be very different from the Syriac of Edessa, except perhaps in certain terms and idiomatic expressions. Some Eastern Syrian writers are of the opinion that the language of 'Ahiqar, represented in these Aramaic papyri is the same as the language use by Bar Daysan, Mara Bar Saraphion, Aphrahat and St. Ephraim (14).

Another piece of Syriac literature, interesting because of its antiquity, is the surviving poem of the Aramean Wafa. This poet was first mentioned by Antonius Rhetor in the tenth chapter of the fifth treatise of his book *The Knowledge of Rhetoric*. Antonius states, "The fifth meter of poetry is usually composed of six or seven strophes although the number may sometimes increase or decrease. This meter belongs to a man named Wafa, an Aramean philosopher. The composition of poetry by this man, whose name has been unknown for many generations, is evidence that this art (poetry) is old with us" (15). Antonius also cites a few lines in which this ancient poet expresses his joy for having driven grief and worry from his heart. Antonius concludes that "this type of poetry resembles the amorous songs usually composed for occasions such as weddings, or the lyrics commemorating wars" (16). Martin Sprengling, in his dissertation entitled "Antonius Rhetor on Versification," is incorrect in assuming that the "Earliest extant Syriac verse was the few lines by Bar Daysan and the Acts of Thomas, which had been preserved for us" (17). These lines of poetry have been preceded by those of Wafa.

For our information on the surviving Syriac pagan literature, mainly of Baba of Harran, we are indebted to Dionysius Bar Salibi (d. 1171). In his "Discourse Against the Jews and Muhammadans," preserved in MS. 4019 (p. 50) at Harvard University; Bar Salibi calls Baba "the Harranian philosopher." He also cites two works by Baba, "The First Book" and "The Second Book," both of which were published by Monsignor Rahmani in his *Studia Syriaca* in 1904. Bar Salibi appears to have made use of the "Second Book" in his earlier discourse against the Muslims. (18)

In his writing Baba follows the style of pagan priests, which is characterized with the use of short sentences, each bearing a different meaning, and whose expression may give rise to different interpretations. It is worth noting that these two books of Baba contain prophecies about the coming of Jesus Christ. These prophecies probably convinced the Christianized Syrians to preserve these two books, in order to use them in inducing the pagans of Harran to embrace Christianity on the ground that Baba was a prophet. But a closer study of the prophecies indicates that it is not unlikely that Christian scribes interpolated them. Indeed, this is quite obvious, since the Syrians of Harran (commonly called Sabians) rivaled each other in assuming the role of intermediary between the ancient and Islamic civilizations.

Another surviving piece of ancient Syriac Literature is the letter of Mara Bar Saraphion, or Serapion, to his son. The Syriac text of this letter, with an English translation, was published by William Cureton in his *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London, 1855). Nothing much is known about this Mara Bar Saraphion except the scanty information derived from his letter. In this letter Mara mentions that his city (he does not give the name) was destroyed by the Romans, and he and many others were taken captives and treated tyrannically. Mara's companions apparently came from Samosata. He also mentions the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews as a punishment for having murdered Jesus, whom he calls "the wise King." He adds that, although this "wise King" is dead, yet he lives in the wise laws which He promulgated." Judging from the events mentioned in this letter, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, in A.D. 70 and the persecution under Domitian, which began in A.D. 95, Cureton is inclined to place the date of its composition at the close of the first century A.D. However, he recognizes the possibility that the calamities which the writer of this letter mentions are those inflicted by the Romans upon the countries situated on the Tigris and the Euphrates (which had been inflamed against the Romans by Vologesses) in the Parthian Wars under the command of Lucius Verus in A.D. 162-165. If such is the case, then it is more likely that the letter was written at the end of the second century (19).

The author of this letter was undoubtedly a pagan Syrian who had some knowledge about Greek philosophers and learned men, for he mentions Socrates, Archimedes, Pythagoras and Palamedes. This important letter may well be considered the last trace of pagan Syriac literature, which thrived before the emergence of the great Syriac literary movement in the first half of the third century. It also provides evidence that Syriac Literature in the Christian era was not totally cut off from its past.

The surviving Syriac literary writings of the pagan era demonstrate that the ancient nation of Mesopotamia possessed a highly developed literature, as well as literary initiative. They also illustrate that Syriac was, from ancient times, a flexible and expressive language, suitable to be the vehicle of literature and philosophy. Contrary to the opinion held by Rubens Duval and other Western writers, Syriac Literature had a continuous tradition down to the Christian era. The legend of 'Ahiqar, the poem of Wafa, the writings of Baba of Harran, and the letter of Mara Bar Saraphion leave us no choice but to admit that the Syriac of Edessa represents the highest degree of development of the Syriac-Aramaic language used by these earlier writers.

Continued on Next Page

Matti Moosa's

Studies in Syriac Literature

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Syriac Literature of the Christian Era

We come now to an important part of our subject, the extensive body of Christian Syriac literature. As this literature commences with the Bible, we think it appropriate to discuss the origin of the Syriac versions of the Bible, particularly the translation of the Old Testament commonly called the *Pshitto*, ("simple"), because of its uncomplicated and readable style. The *Pshitto*, which is the Syriac version of canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, occupies a prominent place in the history of the Syrian Church (20). It throws light on the beginnings of Christianity in Mesopotamia, mainly in Edessa, as well as on the history of the early Syrian Church.

The oldest available manuscript of the Old Testament according to the *Pshitto* version is the British Museum Add. 14425, transcribed at Amid by a deacon named John in A.D. 464. The canonical books of the Old Testament in this version are essentially those of the Hebrew Bible, except for the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, which are excluded by both Eastern and Western Syrian manuscripts. Eastern Syrian manuscripts, however, exclude the book of Esther, too. Nevertheless, all of these books, whether included in the *Pshitto* or not, were cited by Syrian Fathers like Afraates (Aphrahat) (21), in the middle of the fourth century, and St. Ephraim (22). Other extant copies of the Syriac Old Testament such as the Florentine MS. Laurent. Or. 58, date back to the ninth century.

According to the Syrian Bishop Yeshu Dad (d. 852), the *Pshitto* was translated into Syriac in the time of Solomon at the request of Hiram, King of Tyre. Another tradition credits the priest Asa or Ezra with this translation (23). Burkitt maintains that the Syriac translations of the Old and New Testaments date back to the time of Abgar V, King of Edessa, who was converted to Christianity by the apostle 'Addai (Thaddeus) (24). According to Nestle, Bar Hebraeus makes the strange statement that, according to Eusebius (cf. *Hist. Eccles.*, VI, xvi, 4, and VI, xii), Origen found the Syriac version in the keeping of a widow at Jericho (25). Eusebius, to be sure, mentions that one of the translations used by Origen includes the remark that it was discovered at Jericho, in a tub, in the time of Antonius the son of Severus (26). Why and how Bar Hebraeus got the idea that the version was Syriac is not known. Still other writers are of the opinion that no information is available about the *Pshitto*, and that even Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) did not know anything about it (27). Likewise, he seems to have known nothing about the person who translated some of the Scriptural books, mainly the Psalms, from Palestinian-Aramaic into Hebrew, and thence into Greek and Syriac (28). However, Paul B. Kahle, in his book *The Cairo Geniza*, is inclined to agree with other writers that the *Pshitto* was a translation made by Jews

for a Jewish community. This community can only be that of what is now Arbela, or 'Arbil, in Iraq (29). Reference should be made also to the theory advanced by F. Crawford Burkitt, that "the Church in Edessa at the earliest period of its existence took over from the Synagogue a vernacular rendering of the Old Testament (30). As will be seen later, the substantiation of these two theories will depend ultimately upon whether Christianity was first established in Edessa or in Adiabene, and it is to that dispute that we now turn.

In a special chapter on the origin of the *Pshitto* and its relation to the establishment of Christianity in Edessa, Kahle gives an analysis of the different opinions on the subject. Kahle states positively at the outset that "we have no information whatsoever about the origin of the *Pshitto*, the Syriac translation of the Old Testament. Even Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428) did not know by whom or where it was made" (31). Kahle accepts the British Museum MS. Add. 14425 as the oldest Syriac manuscript containing the canonical books of the Old Testament. While it differs from other manuscripts, he notes that it seems to be in harmony with the Hebrew Bible. The studies made of the different manuscripts of the Syriac Old Testament have, however, led to uncertain conclusions.

Professor W. S. Barnes, who edited the Pentateuch in Syriac for the British and Foreign Bible Society (London, 1914), finds the Florentine MS. Or. 58 (9th century) of "seriously lessened" value in fixing the text of the *Pshitto*. John Pinkerton, on the other hand, considers that MS and the British Museum MS. Add. 14427 as important and reliable as MS. 14425 (32).

Pinkerton observes that although this MS. presents a literal translation, its style is smoother and freer than that of the two other manuscripts. He remarks that since St. Ephraim (d. 373) was familiar with the text type represented in the British Museum MS. Add. 14425, it should be regarded as the oldest text of the Syriac Pentateuch, and cannot be the result of any later revision of the Hebrew text (33). Pinkerton concludes that a text of the type of the British Museum Add. 14425 must have been the work of a Jewish community. This Jewish translation, later taken by the Christian Church, was gradually improved and amplified, and finally became the standard text. Kahle seems to be convinced by Pinkerton's conclusion (34).

The question which seems to be Pinkerton's main concern, as to the identity and location of this Jewish community, is partially answered by Burkitt. Like Pinkerton, Burkitt is of the opinion that the Old Testament in Syriac is a direct translation from the Hebrew. Throughout the Old Testament, particularly the Pentateuch, the *Pshitto* appears to be the work of one who was well versed in Hebrew and fully acquainted with Jewish translations. The *Pshitto* may have undergone revision at a later period, probably by Christians; yet, judging from its elements, which are essentially Hebrew, we are certain that it is not the work of Christian Syrians. Therefore, the *Pshitto* was the work of masterful and learned Jews, and was meant to be used by the convert Jews in Edessa (35).

To illustrate this point, Burkitt refers to the traditional story which maintains that the apostle 'Addai (Thaddeus) first preached the Gospel in Edessa. Eusebius first related the story that Abgar, King of Edessa, heard of the miracles of Jesus and wished He could come to his city and heal his incurable disease. Abgar wrote to Jesus, inviting Him to Edessa, and offered to share with Him his small principality, and also to protect Him from the Jews' antagonism. Jesus, we are further told, answered Abgar that after His ascent to heaven, He would send one of the disciples to cure him. Consequently, Thomas, one of the Twelve, by a divine impulse sent 'Addai, one of the Seventy, to Edessa, where he healed Abgar and preached the Gospel in that city. This in brief, is the story which has been rejected by some Western writers as strictly a legend, while historians of the Eastern churches believe it to be authentic. Their position is supported by Eusebius, who relates with confidence that "The epistles themselves were taken by us from the archives of Edessa and then literally translated by us from the Syriac language" (36). Coming back to our subject, Burkitt observes that, according to this story, Addai, while in Edessa, remained with one Tobit, son of Tobia(s), a Jew from Palestine. Furthermore, 'Addai's preaching was

successful among Jews. This indicates that Edessa was a center of Jewish life before it became a center of Christianity. Burkitt's conclusion may be cited here in full:

Thus we may infer that the Old Testament in Syriac was originally a vernacular rendering of the Hebrew Scriptures made by Jews for Jews resident at Edessa and speaking the language of the country (37).

It has been mentioned previously that John Pinkerton presented the ideas that the *Pshitto* was made by Jews for a Jewish community, but without identifying this community. Kahle tries to solve the problem of identifying this community by citing the opinion of Joseph Marquart, who points out that the home of this Jewish community is Adiabene, a kingdom situated between the two rivers Zabs (the present site of 'Arbil in Iraq) (38). For information on this Jewish community, Kahle refers to Josephus, who relates in his *Antiquities of the Jews* the chronicle of the small Jewish community and the Jewish dynasty of Adiabene (39). This Jewish community is believed to have become influential by the conversion of the royal family and a great number of prominent families, who naturally needed a Bible written in the Syriac language of Adiabene. Kahle seems quite certain that at least the Pentateuch, and perhaps more of the Syriac Old Testament, was introduced into Adiabene in the middle of the first century B.C. The text of the Bible, he believes, was translated into the Syriac of Adiabene by some of the Palestinian Jews who had settled there. Kahle also assumes that the presence of a Jewish community in Adiabene must have helped to pave the way for the Christian mission. He seems to agree with Joseph Marquart's conclusion that "the Christian mission did not start among the pagan population of Edessa, the later center of Christianity, in the East, but among the Jewish population of Adiabene" (40).

Kahle also states that this suggestion has been proved to be correct by the *Chronicle of Arbela*, written by the sixth-century Nestorian Mshiha Zkha. This work was discovered, edited, translated into French and published by Alphonse Mingana in 1907. The text of this chronicle has also been carefully investigated by Sachau, who translated it into German and published it in 1915. Kahle, remarking on the great value and authenticity of this chronicle, cites Adolph Harnack's statement, "We have here a very valuable document from the provinces of the Roman Empire" (41).

The main theme of the *Chronicle of Arbela*, which Kahle and other writers have cited, is that the missionary activities of the apostle 'Addai started in Adiabene some years before A.D. 100, and that about this time 'Addai baptized a certain Phkidha and sent him to Arbela, where, for the next ten years, he served as the first bishop of the Christian converts from Judaism (42). This new Christian community obviously used the same Old Testament which they had possessed before their conversion. Furthermore, the *Chronicle* describes the missionary activities of 'Addai in other parts of Mesopotamia, but does not particularly mention Edessa. Although Harnack assigns the missionary activities of 'Addai in Edessa to the year A.D. 100, yet he admits that in reality nothing is known about him. This leaves Kahle with no doubt that Christianity began in Adiabene, not Edessa.

According to the *Doctrine of 'Addai*, an apocryphal Syriac document of the late fourth century, 'Addai went to Edessa and healed King Abgar in fulfillment of the promise of Jesus. As a result of the healing of Abgar and the preaching of 'Addai, the Edessan royal family and many citizens were converted to Christianity. By the order of Abgar, 'Addai built a church in Edessa. Day by day, a large multitude of people assembled and attended the prayers and listened to the reading of the Old Testament and the "Ditonron," believed by William Cureton to be the *Diatessaron* (43). The death of 'Addai occurred shortly before that of Abgar, in A.D. 45, so that the ministry of 'Addai in Edessa covered a period of about ten or eleven years.

The *Doctrine of 'Addai* seems to be in complete opposition to the *Chronicle of Arbela*. Kahle, however, thinks that the legend of 'Addai was imported into Edessa and developed there to substantiate the conversion to Christianity of Abgar IX (A.D. 179-217), with whom Bar Daysan had friendship. He also believes that the

earliest evidence of Christianity in Edessa is the mention of the destruction of a church there by a great flood (A. D. 201). For this and other reasons, Kahle dismisses the *Doctrine of 'Addai* as bearing no historical relation to the beginning of Christianity in Edessa (44).

His argument, however, appears unconvincing because of his failure to identify the "'Addai" of the *Chronicle of Arbela*. Furthermore, neither he nor Harnack provides any information about this 'Addai, except that he was mentioned by Mshiha Zkha, the writer of the *Chronicle*, as the apostle who preached the Gospel in Adiabene. If the chronicler of Arbela regards 'Addai who ordained Phkidha as a bishop of Adiabene about A.D. 100 as the same 'Addai who was one of the Seventy Evangelists, it is most unlikely that this apostle lived long enough to carry out such activity. Even if we assume that the writer of the *Chronicle of Arbela* confused the name of 'Addai with that of his disciple 'Aggai, it is also unlikely that 'Aggai lived to the end of the first century. There is, however, an extensive body of evidence which appears to contradict the assertions made by the chronicler of Arbela. Bar-hadh-Bshabba, a Nestorian chronicler of the sixth century and most probably a contemporary of Mshiha Zkha, states positively that "the establishers of the church of Edessa are 'Addai and his disciples." Although he does not mention the name of this disciple, we know definitely that he was named Man (45).

We also have it on the authority of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) that when Abgar V, King of Edessa (d. 50 A.D.) was converted by 'Addai, he sent to Jerusalem a group of transcribers who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Syriac and brought it back to Edessa (46). This copy seems to have been collated with the Greek version in the fourth century and was later revised, together with the New Testament, by Rabula, bishop of Edessa (d. 435). This is also confirmed by Bar Hebraeus, who, according to Assemani, states that "some Books of the Old and New Testaments were translated at Edessa in the time of Abgar and 'Addai" (47). Assemani also mentions that "there is a record preserved of a very ancient copy of a Gospel written in the hand of Aggaeus ('Aggai), himself the disciple and successor of Addaeus ('Addai), in the year of the Greeks 389, or A.D. 78" (48).

Another Syrian chronicler, commonly known as the Anonymous Edessan (ca. twelfth century), relates that "'Addai performed his first service in the eastern part of a large pagan temple in Edessa. This temple was built in the time of Seleucus near a water spring in the Western section of the city. This temple was decorated and also stood on pillars made of marble. Abgar the King, as well as the citizens of Edessa, attended the services held by 'Addai and received the holy communion. Afterwards, this temple was called the Temple of the Savior" (49). Another Nestorian writer, Bishop Solomon of Basra (c. 1222), states in his *Book of the Bee* that "'Addai was from Paneas and he preached in Edessa in Mesopotamia in the days of Abgar" (50).

Michael the Great (d. 1199), Syrian Patriarch of Antioch, even provides us with a list of the bishops who succeeded 'Addai in Edessa. Although Burkitt cites this list to support his view, yet "because of confusions and imperfections," especially in the order of the list, he is doubtful whether Michael himself composed it (51). Kahle seems to agree with Burkitt's view on this matter (52). But closer study shows that Burkitt, not Michael, is the one who is confused, apparently due to his misreading of some of the names mentioned in the list.

Michael gives the names of the Edessan bishops in this order. 'Addai, 'Aggai, Palut, 'Abshlama, Barsmayya, Tiridit, Bozni, Shalula, 'Abda, Guriya, 'Abda, Ezni, Oshtasab and 'Aggi (53). Burkitt reads the names of the two bishops called 'Abda as "slave" and "another slave." Then he complains, "What Michael means by 'another slave' I do not know." For this and other reasons he thinks that the whole list is extremely confused (54). To be sure, 'Abda in Syriac does mean "slave," but in this list of the bishops of Edessa it is used as a proper name, analogous with the name 'Abd in Arabic. Michael must surely have known the *Doctrine of 'Addai*, which is assigned to the latter half of the fourth century, and quite possibly used it in compiling his list. Yet he does not mention the ordination of Palut, a disciple of 'Addai, who, according to the *Doctrine of 'Addai*, received the Hands of Priesthood by Serapion, patriarch of Antioch (191-211), and the omission suggests that he regarded the account of this incident as spurious. Furthermore, he lists the names of three bishops not cited in the order of bishops

given by the *Doctrine of 'Addai*. These names may have come from other sources, about which, unfortunately, we have no information.

Despite these differences, the list compiled by Michael provides further evidence of the early establishment of Christianity in Edessa. In view of these facts, we may conclude that Christianity began in Edessa, not Adiabene, in the first half of the first century. Also, the Christian community of Edessa used a version of the Old Testament which had been translated from Hebrew and which was apparently the source of the Syriac *Pshitto*. It is not unlikely that this version survives in the copy of British Museum Add. 14425, which dates back to the fifth century. As for the preaching of 'Addai in Adiabene, it seems more acceptable to assume that after he healed Abgar and preached the Gospel in Edessa, 'Addai also made a wide journey of the neighboring areas, including Adiabene, where he preached the Gospel before his return to Edessa, where he died in 45.

The preceding pages show that the *Doctrine of 'Addai* places the use of the Old as well as the New Testaments, which it calls the "Ditonron," in the middle of the first century. William Cureton suggests that this "Ditonron" must be the *Diatessaron* which had been compiled by Tatian. Cureton cannot be quite correct, since the evidence that Tatian compiled the *Diatessaron* between A.D. 152-172 does not accord with our knowledge of the *Doctrine of 'Addai*, which has historical if not canonical validity (55). Burkitt suggests that the "'Addai" of the Syriac tradition, who evangelized Edessa and used the *Diatessaron*, and Tatian, who (according to Eusebius and Epiphanius) compiled the *Diatessaron*, probably in Rome, and returned to Mesopotamia before A.D. 170, are one and the same, 'Addai being Tatian's native Semitic name as Saul was the native name of St. Paul (56).

This assumption is hardly credible if the element of time is taken into consideration, for at least sixty years elapsed between the death of 'Addai and the birth of Tatian. Even if 'Addai might be identified with Tatian, still it is inconceivable that the Christian community in Edessa in the first half of the first century possessed a complete version of the Gospels which this alleged "'Addai-Tatian" used as the basis for his *Diatessaron*. Therefore, 'Addai and Tatian are two different persons.

Tatian, who calls himself "the Assyrian," was born about 110 A. D., probably in Adiabene. He was raised a heathen and studied the sciences of the Greeks. After a long journey into many countries he reached Rome, where Justin the martyr converted him to Christianity. Tatian returned to Mesopotamia, probably to Edessa, about A.D. 172 and began to promulgate his heretical teachings (57). He is said to have died in A.D. 180 or shortly thereafter (58).

It is most probable that the word "Ditonron," mentioned in the *Doctrine of 'Addai*, is a later interpolation. However, the fact remains that the early church of Edessa must have relied on the oral tradition of the Gospel, or probably used a single Gospel at least until the middle of the first century.

William Wright is of the opinion that a Syriac version of the Gospels, along with other parts of the New Testament, must have existed in the second century, and that it was probably the source from which Tatian compiled his *Diatessaron* (59). Even if such a version existed and was in use before the *Diatessaron*, it was forced into the background when the *Diatessaron* gained great popularity in the early Syrian church. Aphrahat quoted it, and St. Ephraim wrote a commentary upon it which until recently survived only in an Armenian version (60). Other sources erroneously attribute a translation of the separate Gospels to Palut, an early bishop of Edessa (61). The *Diatessaron*, however, remained in use until Rabula, bishop of Edessa (411-435) ordered that versions of the separate Gospels should be used in its place.

Theodore of Cyrrhus (423-457), we are told, subsequently destroyed more than two hundred copies of the *Diatessaron*. As a result, no Syriac version of the *Diatessaron* has survived, except for a few passages cited by Yeshu' Dad, bishop of Haditha, in his commentary on the Gospels (62).

Besides the fragments of the *Diatessaron*, we have later Syriac versions of the separate Gospels which were closely associated with it. Of these Gospels, which were probably translated into Syriac about A.D. 200, only two survive. The first of these is the Curetonian (early fifth century), so called after William Cureton, who discovered it and published it in 1858 (63). The other one is the Sinaitic palimpsest (fourth century), discovered by Agnes Smith Lewis in the Convent of St. Catherine in Mount Sinai in 1892, and published in 1894 (64). Although the readings of the two versions differ, both were influenced by the *Diatessaron*.

In the first quarter of the fifth century, Rabula undertook the revision of the text of the Separate Gospels according to the original Greek. Soon this revised version was authorized by the church and began to supersede the *Diatessaron*. This version contained the four Gospels, the Acts, three general epistles (James I, Peter I, John I) and fourteen epistles of St. Paul (65).

This version of the New Testament underwent a series of later revisions. The first one was made by Philoxenus of Mabug, assisted by the chorepiscopus Polycarp. According to William Wright, Philoxenus and Polycarp produced a "literal translation of the whole Bible in the year 502" (66), and soon this version became the standard work of the day. In the year 616-617 Paul, bishop of Tal Mawzalt, translated into Syriac the Hexapla text of Origen by order of the Patriarch Athanasius I. This version was highly esteemed by the Syrian writers, especially Bar Hebraeus, who quoted it and preferred it to the *Pshitto* of the New Testament (67). In 616 the New Testament of Philoxenus of Mabug was revised by Thomas of Harolea (Tuma al-Harqali) at Alexandria. In addition to the Canonical Books of the *Pshitto*, the Hardean version contained the four shorter epistles (68). Finally, Jacob of Edessa, while in retirement at the monastery of Tal 'Adda (704-705) undertook the revision of the text of the *Pshitto* with the help of the Greek version. Of this version five copies survive, some of which were transcribed in the year 719-720. This translation, however, never gained popularity in church circles (69).

Christianity, as we saw, began not in Adiabene, but in Edessa, and the Christian community there was the first to use the Syriac version of the Old Testament translated from the Hebrew. As the capital of the small Syrian principality, called by the natives "Urhoi" or "Callirrhoe" ("She with the beautiful waters"), Edessa was destined to become not only the center of Christianity, but the center of literature in Mesopotamia (70). Being part of the Church of Antioch, under the jurisdiction of its Patriarchal See, the famous school of Edessa was the place where the Syriac-speaking Fathers of the fifth century initiated the great task of translating the theological writings of the Greek Fathers as well as works of Peripatetic philosophy, into Syriac. This period boasted great writers, poets, and philosophers, including Bar Daysan, Aphrahat (the Persian Sage), St. Ephraim and many others.

Perhaps the most celebrated of those men whose literary works and religious views had great impact on Syriac Literature were Bar Daysan (154-222) (71) and St. Ephraim (d. 373), "the Prophet of the Syrians." Although they had in common an unsurpassed knowledge of their native Syriac tongue, their religious views were diametrically opposed.

From the same period as the oldest Syriac text of the Holy Bible, we have the dialogue *On Fate* between Bar Daysan and his disciples. This Syriac philosophical treatise, which was discovered, translated into English, and published by William Cureton in 1855 presents a profane attitude rather than the religious outlook characteristic of Syriac literature. According to Eusebius, Jerome, Theodoretus and Epiphanius the title of this dialogue was *On Fate*, but the Syriac manuscript edited by Cureton gives the title as "*The Book of the Laws of the Countries*" (72). To be sure, the dialogue contains a discussion of destiny, as well as of the different customs and laws of the nations known at that time. Yet in all probability the Syriac title is more correct, since it was presumably the author's original title. Although the title *On Fate* may well have been appended by the later Greek writers who alluded to this dialogue, this writer accepts that title as better known to Western scholars. We should also note

here the opinion of some critics, that the dialogue *On Fate* was not written by Bar Daysan, but was retold by one of his disciples, Philip. Bar Daysan, however, is the main speaker and takes a leading part in the conversation.

For our information on Bar Daysan we are indebted to Eusebius, the celebrated church historian of the fourth century, and to Michael the Great, the Syrian Patriarch of Antioch (d. 1199). Both authors give different accounts about Bar Daysan, but they agree on one point: he was a heretic. Burkitt, who regards the *Chronicle* of Michael the Great as "a serious source of historical information in those passages where there is a good reason to believe that Michael and his predecessors have all copied faithfully from a much older source," accuses him of being ignorant and prejudiced in his account of Bar Daysan (73). His main argument is that the philosophy of a free thinker like Bar Daysan could not be easily packed into the compendiums of annalists, and that in later ages Bar Daysan was considered a great heretic and schismatic (74).

But this argument can hardly be justified. If Michael has copied faithfully from a much older source, then there is no reason to discredit his account concerning Bar Daysan. As a matter of fact, non-Syrian writers since the beginning of the fourth century recognized Bar Daysan as a heretic. According to Eusebius, he was a man of great abilities and a powerful disputant in the Syriac tongue. He also composed treatises against Marcion and others who had heretical ideas, among them his treatise *On Fate*, addressed to a certain Antonius (75). These treatises were translated into Greek by one of Bar Daysan's friends. Bar Daysan was also a powerful speaker, and therefore capable of attracting many followers. Yet, as Eusebius relates, although Bar Daysan was a disciple of the heretic Valentinus, he afterwards rejected most of his fiction and apparently returned to his own correct opinion. But he did not entirely wipe away the filth of his old heresy (76).

In the dialogue *On Fate*, the disciples of Bar Daysan inquire about the cause of evil, particularly moral evil, in this world, and ask, "Why did not God create us so that we should not sin and be guilty?" Bar Daysan begins by defending the free will of man, asserting that God meant him to be free and even made him equal with the angels. Man, therefore, is not like the moon, the stars, and other spheres, which have no free will of their own, but are subjected to fixed rules and ordinances which they must follow. For the sun, he argues, cannot defy the laws of nature by refusing to rise, or the stars by refusing to shine. However, the greater goodness of God to man has manifested itself in the gift of free will, which is not possessed by these elements, and by which man can justify and govern himself. God, therefore, did not mean to create man as an instrument without will or freedom.

Bar Daysan goes on to explain that the moral commandments or principles given to man are not hard to execute, as one of his disciples, Awida, had thought. He remarks that men are not asked to do anything which they are unable to do.

For the moral principles contained in the commandments, such as not to steal or to commit adultery, are subject to the mind of man, and are associated not with the power of the body, but with the will of the soul. Bar Daysan also explains that to do good is easier than to avoid evil, for good is man's own, and hence man feels happy when he does good. Furthermore, by doing good, man pleases his conscience. Evil, on the other hand, is a disturbance of the sound nature of man. Those who do wrong are agitated and troubled. Thus, men are different because they act differently. If all men acted or thought the same way, then they would be governed by a same nature; they would have no free will. Because men are free, they are to be held responsible for their acts.

Bar Daysan also discusses the ideas of astronomers, whom he calls 'Chaldeans,' concerning the decree of Fortune by which men are governed. These Chaldeans attributed to the influence of the stars all the actions of men, good or bad, as well as all the circumstances that befell them, such as sickness or health, and wealth or poverty. Other people, Bar Daysan maintains, think that this belief of the Chaldeans is fallacious. For these people, Fortune does not exist, but is merely an empty name. In the opinion of these people, things great or small, as well as physical defects and human faults, happen to man by chance. Still others maintain that all bad things that happen to men are nothing but punishments inflicted upon them by God.

After discussing these beliefs, Bar Daysan presents his own opinion. He acknowledges that men are influenced by nature equally, by Fortune differently, and by their free will each as he wishes. Many things in life are subject to the laws of nature, including physical growth, generation, old age, eating, drinking, etc. These things are not influenced by Fortune. When the operations of nature are fulfilled, however, then Fortune interferes to influence things. Therefore, both physical perfection and deformity are products of Fortune. Similarly, all abominations, filth, indecency, and extravagance, and the like, are influenced by Fortune. Whenever the cause of nature or that of the stars becomes disturbed, Fortune, to be sure, causes this disturbance. As Fortune influences nature, it is in turn influenced by the free will of men. Behind these elements stands God, who ordained how life was to be and who alone determined the perfection of all His creation. But Fortune influences only part of the lives of men, since they are enabled by the gift of free will to act as they find fitting. As a result of this free will, men in different places have established different laws of their governance. Bar Daysan then proceeds to discuss these laws.

Taken with the ideas in the second part of the dialogue, this summary of his philosophy presents Bar Daysan as agnostic, believing in one Almighty God who has created the world and who is the support of all His creatures. God first created the four basic elements, fire, water, light and darkness, and determined for each of them a certain amount of freedom. Each of these elements is endowed with generative and destructive powers. Acting in His own wisdom, then, God allowed evil in this world, but will create a new world free from evil. He created not only man, but the angels to whom He granted an equally free will. Man is composed of mind, soul, and body; all things concerning his life, death, happiness, unhappiness, richness, poverty, are influenced by the stars.

The dialogue *On Fate* reveals Bar Daysan as a man of exceptional talents, very well-read, especially in the science of the Chaldeans. Likewise, we see that Bar Daysan knew how to think for himself, unhampered by the religious restrictions of his time. He did not follow the idea of any established school of his time, but rather established his own school. We are informed that he headed a school in Edessa, and that some of the Greek scholars who visited this school observed that the young Bar Daysan represented most appropriately the Christian culture (77). Bar Daysan's teaching and poetry, which were very popular in Edessa, must have had a great influence on the Syrians.

In fact, this surviving treatise *On Fate* and the life of its author attest to the fact that the Syrian mind was no less imaginative or competent than the Greek mind. As a philosopher and a free thinker, Bar Daysan may be judged on his merits. To the Syrians of the third century, however, his philosophy did not serve to advocate the cause of Christianity or that of the Church. His ideas must have threatened the well-being of the Church, which St. Ephraim later felt constrained to defend. At the time of Bar Daysan, the Church, more concerned with salvation, had no use for his philosophy.

The Syrian Church, then, knew Bar Daysan as a heretic following Valentinus, who preached Dualism, while in the dialogue *On Fate* he appears as a believer in Christ. He may have expressed his belief in Christ after rejecting his heresy. Yet the Syrian Church in the fourth century made every effort to suppress his heretical ideas, and, as we shall see, St. Ephraim was the bitterest opponent of Bar Daysan's heresy.

According to St. Ephraim, "Bar Daysan wrote *madrashe* (metrical hymns) and provided them with tunes. He composed Psalms and put them into metrical forms, arranging the words by means of measures and balances. In these songs, Bar Daysan offered to the guileless, bitter things in sweet guise, in order that, though feeble, they might not choose wholesome food. He sought to emulate David, to deck himself out in his graces, that, like him, he might be exalted; one hundred and fifty Psalms did he likewise compose. His truth he forsook, my brethren, while imitating his number" (78).

This statement provides little information about the specific nature of his heresy. Likewise, St. Ephraim's fifty-fifth hymn against heresies, does not quote from Bar Daysan's verse extensively enough to give us an insight as

to the nature of his beliefs. St. Ephraim did not refute the ideas of Bar Daysan one by one, but merely extracted certain passages and formulated metrical refutations of them.

Bar Daysan, a powerful poet, masterful in his choice of words, used his metrical talents to propagate false doctrines. By setting his metrical compositions to charming tunes, he made them a more powerful instrument for moulding the popular mind, which was thoroughly amenable to musical verse. These songs remained popular until the fourth century, when St. Ephraim, intending to fight Bar Daysan's heresy, drew upon his own poetic ability to defend the truth, employing the same meters as Bar Daysan. Thus the songs of Bar Daysan lost their popularity, were neglected, and finally were lost (79).

Michael the Great (d. 1199) gives us a clearer picture of Bar Daysan's heresy. He relates that "Bar Daysan says that there are three chief Natures and four Existences, which are reason, power, understanding and knowledge. The four powers are Fire and Water and Light and Spirit (Wind), and from these come the other existences of the world, 360 in number. Bar Daysan also says that He who spoke with Moses and the prophets was the Chief of Angels, and not God himself; and that our Lord was clothed with the body of an angel, and from Mary was clothed the shining Soul, which thus took form and body. Furthermore, the Upper Powers gave man his soul, the Lower Powers gave him the limbs, the Sun gave him the brain and the Moon and Planets gave him the other parts" (80).

According to Bar Hebraeus, Bar Daysan called the Sun the "Father of Life," and the Moon the "Mother of Life" and declared that at the beginning of each month the Mother of Life takes off her dress, which is light, and cohabits with the Father of Life and gives birth to children to increase and enrich the population of the Lower World" (81). Whether the ideas contained in these teachings are heretical or not, the fact remains that Bar Daysan confused many pagan teachings with his Christian belief, and the Church could not tolerate this confusion. If Bar Daysan had been an Orthodox Christian, the early Fathers of the Syrian Church would never have branded him as a heretic. Rubens Duval is correct in concluding that it is difficult to deny the heresy of Bar Daysan, according to the testimonies of the ancient fathers of the church and their refutation of it (82).

In addition to the dialogue *On Fate*, Bar Daysan composed many other works, which Ibn al-Nadim lists in his *Kitab al-Fihrist*, and he may have written the history of Armenia, which he intended to evangelize (83). The complete loss of these books is to be regretted.

The teachings of Bar Daysan carried on by his disciples after his death in 222, were popular even after the emergence of Islam and influenced the theological doctrine of al-Rafida sect. Some Muslim learned men even used the name of Bar Daysan as a nickname, as did Abu Shakir al-Daysani, and some also wrote under the name al-Daysaniyya, derived from Bar Daysan (84).

Probably the most celebrated of all the Syrian learned men and Fathers of the church is St. Ephraim, commonly known as Ephraim Syrus (The Syrian). St. Ephraim was born at Nisibin about 303 A. D., to Christian parents. There he studied under the pious bishop Jacob, who is said to have taken young Ephraim with him to the Council of Nicaea (325). About this year, Bishop Jacob appointed Ephraim a teacher at the school of Nisibin, which he had established.

Ephraim served in this school under its succeeding principals, among them Baboy, Walgash and Abraham, whom he praised in his early poetry. He remained in his teaching position here for thirty-eight years, until 363, when the city of Nisibin was occupied by the Persians. With the demise of the school of Nisibin in this year, Ephraim and other members of the faculty withdrew and established the school of Edessa, also called the "Persian school" because its teachers had come from the area under Persian domination (85). Ephraim died in 373 A.D.

St. Ephraim, the most prolific figure in Syriac literature, achieved greater distinction as a poet than as a prose writer. The sheer bulk of his poetic output, the variety of topics he treated, the different meters he used with apparent facility, and above all, the sincerity and unpretentious spirit which pervade his compositions make him indisputably the Syrian poet *par excellence*.

St. Ephraim must have composed poetry at an early age when he lived at Nisibin, probably after reading the poetry of Bar Daysan and his son Harmonius, who, like his father, was a great poet. He is said have composed twenty-one poems on Nisibin and the calamities which befell that city after its occupation by the Persians. After he moved Edessa, he added many other lines to these compositions, bringing the total to seventy-three poems. These poems were edited and published by Gustav Bickell in 1866, under the title *Carmina Nisibena* (86).

Most of Ephraim's poems were composed in his favorite seven-syllabic meter, which later carried his name (the "Ephraimite" meter). A great number of his *madrashe* were also composed in this meter, although he used a variety of other meters as well. These *madrashe* generally are songs of variable strophic structure, usually followed by an '*Unith* (refrain), and intended to be sung by an alternating choir. St. Ephraim composed *madrashe* against the heresies of Marcion, Mani, Bar Daysan and the Arians. Other *madrashe* dealt with a variety of religious and polemical themes.

Another type of hymn composed by St. Ephraim is the '*maymar*, which is sharply distinguished from the *madrashe*. In effect, the '*maymar* is a homily, much more limited in strophic structure, most often containing four or six verses of equal length, to be recited by a single performer.

The prose writing of St. Ephraim consists of his commentaries on Genesis and part of Exodus. His commentaries on the *Diatessaron* and on the Pauline epistles survive only in the Armenian language. Other major prose works are his two discourses against early heresies (addressed to Hyppatius and Domnus), two tracts on the Most High, and an epistle to the monks who dwelt in the mountains (87). Many other prose writings have been erroneously attributed to him.

St. Ephraim represents an age in which the Syrians wielded tremendous spiritual influence as the propagators and defenders of Christianity against pagan and heretical ideas. Early Church Fathers, whether Greeks, Syrians, or Romans, shared the common cause of preserving their Christian faith. To this end they began to write history, compose religious hymns, and interpret the Holy Scriptures; to this end, too, St. Ephraim directed his voluminous poetical writings. To his countrymen, St. Ephraim was the exemplar of Christian zeal, wisdom and eloquence. To the contemporary Greek Fathers of the church, he was the "Mental Euphrates of the Church, from whom the whole company of believers, being watered, produced a hundredfold the fruit of faith; and the fertile vine of God, putting forth the fruits of the sweet clusters of doctrine, and refreshing the children of the church with the fullness of divine love" (88).

St. Ephraim and his works reflect the struggles of a spiritual being against a predominantly pagan world. He was more than a poet portraying the events of his time, or trying to make a living by praising men. He was, as his fellow-men called him, "the Prophet of the Syrians," "the Sun of the Syrians," "the Harp of the Holy Spirit" and "Ephraim the Great" (89). In fact, his poems were so much loved and venerated that most of them became part of the church rituals in his lifetime. It is in this particular function that the works of St. Ephraim should be studied and evaluated.

St. Ephraim and his works have become the target of much criticism by some contemporary Western writers. Burkitt, who gives a rather loose paraphrase of Bar Daysan's treatise *On Fate* in his *Early Eastern Christianity*, attempts to present St. Ephraim as "spiteful" toward Bar Daysan. While praising Bar Daysan's ideas, he states that they "give a true picture of Bar Daysan and his disciples more than the spiteful polemics of St. Ephraim or the unintelligently repeated catchwords" (90). Burkitt also expresses his regret that the church considered Bar

Daysan a heretic. Martin Sprengling goes a step further: "clearly and flagrantly, now wilfully, more often stupidly, Ephraim misunderstood Bardaisan" (91).

St. Ephraim need not be defended against such groundless accusations and severe judgments. The long heroic spiritual record of the celebrated Father of the early church sufficiently justifies the defense of his faith and church against heresies. These writers more appropriately should have investigated the causes which motivated St. Ephraim to retaliate against the heretical hymns of Bar Daysan by composing hymns embodying the true Christian belief. In this regard we may ask why St. Ephraim took so much pain and effort to refute the teachings of Bar Daysan. Surely St. Ephraim who followed Bar Daysan by more than a century, was bitter not against the person of Bar Daysan, but against his teachings, which must have contained heretical views. It must also be remembered that the treatise *On Fate*, which contains pagan ideas, does not alone constitute a criterion for Bar Daysan's orthodoxy or heterodoxy; his numerous songs, which have been lost, would be a better basis for judgment.

The poetry of St. Ephraim also has been criticized. Burkitt thinks that St. Ephraim is repetitious, and that his style is allusive and unnatural. He also maintains that while St. Ephraim's thought may seem deep and subtle, when unraveled it is generally seen to be commonplace (92). Commenting on an excerpt from St. Ephraim's lengthy poem on Nisibin as characteristic of his poetry, Burkitt states, "I can see no merit either of simplicity or of subtlety in the choice of words; the main thought... is set forth in the most unattractive fashion" (93). Burkitt questions not only St. Ephraim's poetical faculty, but also his theology and Christology. In brief, he depicts St. Ephraim in the most unfavorable manner.

Rubens Duval seems to be more fair and understanding of St. Ephraim's poetical achievement. After stating that St. Ephraim's prolixity may be found annoying, he adds that "we should not condemn it without taking into account the taste of the Syrians, who loved to repeat and develop the same thought. The Syrians saw excellence where we find fault" (94).

Western commentators are at some disadvantage in assessing the literature of the early Syrian church. Extreme opinions are likely to reflect a certain cultural remoteness which would likely render the conclusions of these writers vulnerable. Indeed, it requires more than the ability to read Syriac in order to understand and appreciate the spirit, style, and themes of works by men of the stature of St. Ephraim. One must be in tune with the spirit of the age before he is in a position to praise or condemn the poetry or the ideas it contains.

The patristic literature of the early Syrian church reflects the spirit and the circumstances of the time in which it was composed. The fact that this literature was written in Syriac heightened its appeal to the people who spoke that language. While it is true that much of the literary production of the Fathers of the church was recondite, yet their works will always remain a monument of sanctified genius and a source of the history of the early church.

Unlike most of this patristic literature, the writings of St. Ephraim were composed for a popular audience. The metrical form of the homilies of St. Ephraim proves that they were meant to be more pleasant to the ear and closer to the heart. The Syrian audience of the fourth century undoubtedly had a strong liking for poetry, and it is therefore not difficult to understand how Ephraim captured the attention of the people, as Bar Daysan had done a century earlier. Indeed, poetry was the sharpest weapon St. Ephraim could have used to fight the heretical teachings of Bar Daysan. His prolixity seems to have enchanted, rather than annoyed his audience, for the Syrian mind was receptive and attentive to religious poetry. Even in the present time, when Syriac is neither spoken nor understood by the Arabic-speaking Syrians (mainly concentrated in Iraq), Syrian worshippers delightedly listen for hours to the hymns composed by St. Ephraim.

St. Ephraim was first and foremost a poet, not a theologian. The very few treatises where he expresses some theological ideas are no sufficient basis for regarding him as a theologian, much less for attempting to derive

from his teachings some kind of systematic theology. Perhaps the highest qualities of this "Prophet of the Syrians" are his close union with mankind and his deep understanding of the sentiment of his audience, who acknowledged his spiritual control over them. "His poems," writes Henry Burgess, "come home to the heart by their recognition of the events of everyday life, and by their constant reference to the joys and sorrows which are identified with our humanity. Many of them indeed are polemical, but even those abound with literary qualities which can make controversy pleasing. We are mistaken if his poems are not found to vibrate in unison with some of the most concealed and delicate chords of the heart" (95).

The next phase of Syriac Literature was distinguished by the translation of Greek philosophy and religious writings into Syriac. This translation movement, which began in the middle of the fifth century and extended into the tenth century, is of the highest importance in the intellectual history of the ancient Middle East. The Syrians, who, through their trade with the West, had served as agents of civilization, now assumed a similar role in spreading the Greek philosophy and sciences (96). Translations were first made from Greek into Syriac, but after the Arab conquest of Syria and Persia, a great deal of translation was done from Syrian and the original Greek into Arabic. Thus the Syrians became the masters of the Arabs. Indeed, asserts Renan, "The Arabs saw nothing in philosophy except through the Syrians" (97).

According to Jurji Zaydan, the Syrians were an active and intelligent people who devoted themselves to learning whenever they were left unharassed by conquerors and persecutors (98). In Mesopotamia they had more than fifty schools, of which the school of Edessa was most famous. It was here that the Syrians initiated the translation and study of Peripatetic philosophy (99).

The influence of Greek culture on Syria should not be ignored, but it has been greatly exaggerated by some writers. Ernest Renan, for example, attempts to depict Syria from the time of Alexander the Great as a province completely Hellenized in its ways of life and thought. He regards the literature of Syria as more Greek than Syriac and even defends the theory that Jesus and His disciples spoke Greek rather than Aramaic (100). With respect to Peripatetic philosophy, Renan observes that the Syrians did not choose Aristotle, but rather received him from the Greeks. He is thus led to believe that "there is an unbroken succession from the Alexandrian School to the Syrians, and from the Syrians to the Arabs" (101).

The fallacy in Renan's theory is that he overestimates the influence of Greek centers of learning such as Alexandria and Antioch on Syrian society, civilization and culture in the fifth century. While Alexandria and Antioch were truly Greek-speaking cities, their influence was predominant only in the coastal towns of Syria. Their effect on the thinking and way of life of the inhabitants of the interior regions was insignificant. This is demonstrated by the fact that when the Arabs occupied Syria, they did not find a Greek-speaking or even grecized population, but a Syriac-speaking population with Syrian customs.

It is true that some of the Syrian and Palestinian intellectuals of this period, such as Zacharias of Mytilene and others, studied at Beirut. Antioch or Alexandria and wrote in Greek; yet there was also a host of writers whose only literary medium was Syriac. Indeed, the Syrians seem to have had for some time a bilingual culture. Renan appears not to recognize that they had long been acquainted with the Greeks' language and learning, not from their studies at Alexandria, but through the direct influence of Hellenistic colonization during the Seleucid period (102).

For example, the letter of Mara Bar Saraphion to his son, which dates back to the second century, is obviously of a Stoic character, and its author appears to be quite familiar with Greek knowledge as well as with the Greek philosophers. Mara writes that "man should rejoice in his prosperity like Polycrates, or in his valor like Achilles...or in his skill like Archimedes, or in his wisdom like Socrates, or in his learning like Pythagoras" (103). Mara also questions the death of Socrates and the burning of Pythagoras by the people of Samos. He

states that "Socrates is not dead because of Plato; neither Pythagoras because of the statue of Juno" (104). Additional traces of direct Greek influence are evident in the dialogue *On Fate* of Bar Daysan.

At the same time, Renan's theory of an unbroken succession from the Alexandrians to the Syrians and from the Syrians to the Arabs appears doubtful, or at least not quite clear. Dr. Max Meyerhof, who has brilliantly analyzed the transmission of Greek knowledge from Alexandria to Baghdad, thinks that the evidence of direct transmission has been lacking to scholars until this day (105). After explaining that the school of Alexandria was still in existence when the Arabs conquered Egypt, and that it may well have played a role in transmitting science to the Arabs, Meyerhof rightly observes that "our knowledge of the intellectual life at the school of Alexandria after the fifth century A.D. is, generally speaking, little and worthless" (106). Meyerhof also discusses the Arabic historical sources which provide information about the school of Alexandria, but cautions that they contain numerous errors and often confuse historical events. Even Hunayn b. Ishaq and his son Ishaq knew little, if anything, of what had been at Alexandria two or three centuries earlier. The only information Hunayn gives is that there were study rings at Alexandria, where a group of pupils might attend the "school" of a tutor to study medicine. So more than one of these private schools existed at Alexandria before the Arab conquest, but there is no evidence that Peripatetic philosophy was taught at Alexandria at that time. All that is certain is that, after embracing Christianity, the Alexandrian Greeks began to apply philosophy to religion, with the result that neo-Platonic and neo-Pythagorean ideas arose and became predominant (107). For the translation and transmission of Greek philosophy and science, one must look not to Alexandria and Antioch, but to Edessa, Nisibin, Ras'Ayn and Qinnessin.

The school of Edessa was no doubt the center of study of Syriac and Greek. Virtually nothing is known about the most ancient Syrian translators, but the oldest of the Edessene manuscripts, which have survived in the British Museum MS. 12150 (dated towards the end of A.D. 412), provide information about some translations from Greek into Syriac. This MS contains the *Recognitions* of Clement, the *Discourses* of Titus of Bosra against the Manichees, the *Theophania* ("Divine Manifestation of our Lord") by Eusebius, and his *History of the Confessors in Palestine* (108). The first Syrian translator known to us is Mana of Beth Hardasher in Persia, a resident at Edessa in the earlier part of the fifth century. Mana, whom Simon of Beth Arsham sarcastically nicknames "The Drinker of Ashes," devoted much of his time to translating the Greek commentaries of Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), and also translated a number of books from Persian into Syriac. Mana's work was later carried on by Nestorian members of the school of Edessa, like Kumi, who translated other works by Theodore of Mopsuestia (109). Other Greek commentaries by Gregorius Nazianzen, Gregorius of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and Basilus were translated into Syriac by the students of the school of Edessa.

It was in the first half of the fifth century that Peripatetic philosophy was revived because of the development of a new dogma which split the Syrian church forever into two hostile camps. This was the heresy of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople (428-431), himself a Syrian from Marash (Germanicia). This heresy, which ascribed to Christ two separate natures as well as two wills and persons, was not, to be sure, first propagated by Nestorius. In fact, he was preceded by Theodore of Tarsus and his disciple Theodore of Mopsuestia, who held the same heretical views, and who both taught at the school of Antioch (110). Nestorius, however, was the one who adopted and promoted this heresy, adding to it his rejection of the epithet "Theotokos," applied to the Virgin Mary. Nestorius was condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431), but his heresy found supporters among the students of the school of Edessa, who seem to have been fascinated by his teaching. This would explain why Nestorius' adherents endeavored to translate the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia into Syriac, and why they devoted themselves to the study of Aristotle. According to Renan, these Nestorians, who were "seduced from the Orthodox faith, strove to apply indiscriminately the logic of Aristotle in elucidating the teachings of Christ" (111). The Nestorians, however, are to be regarded as a division of the Syrian church, and Renan is incorrect in terming them "the descendants of the Peripatetic school" (112).

The Nestorians in Edessa were bitterly opposed by Rabula, bishop of Edessa (d. 435), who in defense of the Orthodox faith expelled the Nestorians (432) and ordered the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia burned (113). After his death, Rabula was succeeded by the Nestorian Bishop Hiba (Ibas), who, as a follower and translator of Theodore of Mopsuestia, had gained the title of "The Interpreter" (114). At the second Council of Ephesus (449), Hiba was condemned for espousing the Nestorian heresy, but he was reinstated at the Council of Chalcedon two years later and occupied the episcopal see of Edessa until October, 457 (115). The school of Edessa, however, never recovered from the great Nestorian schism and was finally closed down by the order of the emperor Zeno in 459 A.D.

The Nestorians, then, were first to begin translating the writings of Aristotle. Prominent among them was Probus (in Syriac, Prophas), who is said to have been the archiater [chief physician] and archdeacon of Antioch (116).

Probus' exact dates are not known, although Abd Yeshu, a prominent Nestorian historian, makes him contemporary with Hiba and Kuma (Cumas) and names him as their collaborator in translating the works of Theodore of Mopsuestia and some of the writings of Aristotle. The British Museum MS. 14660 contains the commentary of Probus on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, in five sections, imperfect at the beginning. He is also credited with having translated and commented upon other parts of the *Organon* and the *Isagoge* of Porphyry (117). Renan asserts that Probus does not merely restate Aristotle's ideas, but actually explains them. In general, however, very little is known about the Nestorians' translations of Peripatetic philosophy during this period. Following the great division of the Syrian Church the Nestorians found refuge in Persia, where Narsay and other learned men established the great school of Nisibin.

Better known during this period is Sergius of Ras 'Ayn, who died at Constantinople about 536 A.D. Sergius, who is said to have studied at Alexandria, achieved great fame among the Eastern and Western Syrians as a physician and a student of Aristotle. His translations covered the whole range of theology, ethics, mysticism, physics, medicine, and philosophy. Although Renan seeks to prove that the Nestorians preceded the Orthodox Syrians in translating Aristotle, he admits that among the "Jacobites," Sergius of Ras 'Ayn "is unanimously called the one who first brought Aristotle into the Syriac language" (118), and describes him as the best of all the Syriac translators (119). Victor Ryssel, who has carefully studied the various versions of Sergius' translation of Aristotle's *Peri Kosmou*, and compared them with the Greek texts, thinks that Sergius expresses faithfully the thought of the author. He also considers this translation particularly skillful, concluding that Sergius knew how to render the sense as well as the details of the original Greek (120). This judgment seems to refute the statement of Ibn Abi Usaybia that Sergius' translation was mediocre, and that Hunayn b. Ishaq corrected him (121).

Another well-known Syrian philosopher is Ahudeme (d. 575), metropolitan of the East. He wrote seven philosophical books the most important of which are *The Book of Definitions*, *Religious Liberty*, and two short treatises entitled *Man as a Microcosm* and *Refutation of the Ideas of Philosophers*. In most of his writings Ahudeme appears as a critical and original writer. The vast knowledge which he acquired while fulfilling his many responsibilities as an indefatigable missionary is most surprising, according to Behnam (122).

The study of philosophy was further carried on by the school of the monastery of Qinnasrin (The Eagles Nest), located on the Euphrates opposite Europos (Jerabis). This monastery was founded by John of Aphthonia (d. 538), who had escaped the persecution of the emperor Justinian. Among the prominent students of Qinnasrin were Thomas of Harclea (d. 627); his disciple Athanasius of Balad (d. 686) who translated the *Isagoge* and many Greek religious writings; Severus Sabukht (d. 667); and the celebrated divine poet and writer, Jacob of Edessa (d. 708).

Of Sabukht's writings there survive a treatise on the syllogisms in the *Analytics Priora* of Aristotle, and a commentary on the *De Interpretatione*. In addition, we possess his letters to Ithalaha of Mosul on certain terms

in the *De Interpretatione*, and those addressed to the periodeutes Yunan on some points in the logic of Aristotle. Sabukht also composed a treatise on the astrolabe (123).

In addition to the writing and translation of books of philosophy, Syriac Literature during this period covered a wide range of topics. Theology, religious poetry, and commentaries on the Scriptures were perhaps the most extensively treated subjects. Jacob of Saruj (d. 521), Philoxenus of Mabug (d. 523), Paul of Callinicus (d. 528), Mara of Amid (d. 529), Paul of Talla (d. 617), John of the Sedras (d. 648), and Marutha of Takrit (d. 649), stand as the most eminent Syrian writers and poets.

The Syrians also concerned themselves with the study and practice of medicine. Sergius of Ras 'Ayn has already been mentioned as an outstanding translator of medical as well as philosophical books. Indeed, medicine was taught along with philosophy in the Syrian schools. Famous among these was the school of Gundishapur, established in the time of Khosru Anushirwan (521-579), which became the main center of the study of medicine and philosophy on Persian territory. It was, moreover, the primary source of court physicians for Caliphs of Baghdad in a later age.

The Syrians did not write much about natural history, for their interest was directed to religious studies. However, they translated a book on physiology from Greek. The anonymous writer of this book, probably composed at Alexandria in the first half of the second century appears to have relied on the knowledge of natural history in the pre-Christian era. Many additions were made to this book, which may have some relationship with the *Hexameron* of St. Basil. Bar Bahlul [10th century] is said to have used a Nestorian version which, in addition to the original chapters, contained a section on geography and natural objects, such as trees and stones (124).

The Syrians also translated a book on agriculture (*Geoponica*), a copy of which survives in the British Museum MS. 14662. The original copy of this treatise contained fourteen chapters, to which were later added two more, dealing with animal husbandry and the cultivation of different plants (125).

The writing of history constitutes an essential part of Syriac Literature during this period. Syrian historians should be considered trustworthy for having mainly restricted themselves to events that they themselves witnessed. Early writings, such as the *Doctrine of 'Addai* and the story of King Abgar, shed light on the beginnings of Christianity in Edessa, even though many interpolations in their texts were made afterwards. However, since these documents were preserved at the royal archives of Edessa (as has been attested by Eusebius, who had personally examined and translated them), they should in all probability be regarded as authentic historical evidence.

One of the earliest of these Syriac historical writings, which contained chronicles of the Persian and Byzantine empires, was the *Acts of Martyrs*. As these martyrs lived in both Persian and Byzantine territory, the chronicles of their martyrdom contain valuable descriptions of the political and administrative conditions of the two empires. Furthermore, these chronicles specify the exact dates on which the historical events they record took place. Of these writings, there survive the acts of Sharbil, who had been a high priest of idols and was converted to Christianity; the martyrdom of Barsmayya, bishop of Edessa; and the martyrdoms of Habib the deacon, Shamuna and Guriyya (126).

Besides the *Acts of Martyrs*, Syrian writers composed biographies of their eminent men, including Rabula, bishop of Edessa; Alexius the man of God; Simon, the Stylite; John of Talla; Dioscorus, patriarch of Alexandria; and the Nestorian Catholici Mar 'Abba and Sabr Yeshu' (127).

In the writing of general history, which did not begin until the sixth century or shortly earlier, the Syrians were influenced by their Greek contemporaries. In this period appeared the history of Yeshu [Joshua] the Stylite; the famous history of John of Ephesus, who combined biography with church history in a magnificent literary style;

and the history of Qura, a priest of Edessa, who gives a detailed account of the church in the time of Justinian II (565-582) (128).

Michael the Great probably relied on the last two of these in writing his *Chronicle* (129). Famous among the Nestorian chroniclers of this period are Mshiha Zkha and Bar-hadh-Bshabba Arbaya, who have been previously cited. Apart from these original Syriac writings, Greek histories like those of Eusebius and Zacharias Rhetor were translated into Syriac.

This era also witnessed the beginning of Syrian mysticism and mystical writings. Available evidence indicates that the earliest work on mysticism was the *Book of Hierotheos* commonly attributed to the Syrian writer Stephen Bar Sudayli (d. 510). This work spread widely in Syria and continued to influence Syrian mystical ideas through the Middle Ages. The impact of this important work on Syrian writers of succeeding generations, especially on Bar Hebraeus, the most renowned Syrian mystic, was tremendous. Perhaps the most elaborate treatment of the *Book of Hierotheos* and the mysticism of Bar Sudayli is A. L. Forthingham, Jr's work titled *Stephen Bar Sudaili The Syrian Mystic and The Book of Hierotheos* (Leyden, 1886).

This period may rightly be considered the golden age of Syriac literature, filled as it is with the names of great writers, poets, theologians, historians, and translators. It was also a period in which the Syrian church was split into two hostile camps, never to meet again. Despite its obvious disadvantages of weakening the church, this rift served as an impetus to the translation of the logic of Aristotle, in which both sides found grounds for defending their doctrinal disputes. It also facilitated the conquest of Syria and Persia by the Arabs, whose domination diverted the Syrians from their destructive hostility to the beneficial and constructive task of translating the knowledge of the Greeks into Arabic. However much Renan and Wright may disdain the Syrians as a mediocre people, the Syrians made many original contributions to the culture of the Middle East, and their role as translators was absolutely essential to the preservation of ancient Greek knowledge.

Although the church was exposed to tyrannical persecution by the Byzantines and the Persians, the Syrians not only continued their literary production, but also carried the torch of the Gospel as far as Arabia in the south, and to Turkistan and China in the east.

The literature of the Nestorians in this period, unlike that of the Western Syrians, is known to us only in general terms. After the great schism of the Syrian church in the fifth century, the Nestorians lived mostly in Persian territory, far from Syria; hence, almost nothing is known about their literature. Still, the literature of the Nestorian Syrians did not surpass that of the Western Syrians. In this regard, Duval correctly observes that the Nestorians did not have prose writers or poets of as high caliber as Jacob of Saruj, Philoxenus of Mabug, Sergius of Ras 'Ayn and John of Asia (130).

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Matti Moosa's

Studies in Syriac Literature

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Syriac Literature Following the Muslim Conquest

The Arab conquest of Syria and Persia in the first half of the seventh century opened a new chapter in the history of Syriac literature. Apart from their language and new faith, the Arabs had nothing to offer the newly conquered countries. But they had the desire and the ability to learn, and soon proved themselves good students of the Syrians. The Arabic language did not immediately replace Syriac, but the Syrians were obviously inclined to learn the tongue of their conquerors. Still, as might be expected of any people facing a national crisis, the Syrians fought to preserve their unity and identity. So they continued to produce Christian literature, but concerned themselves with theology, grammar and philosophy rather than the divisive arguments on dogma of the preceding era.

Besides the many native theological, ascetical, philological and poetical writings, Greek philosophy and medical studies still formed a moderate part of Syriac literature. An entirely new phenomenon, however, was the movement of translation from Syriac and Greek into Arabic, sponsored and encouraged by the 'Abbasids.

In this period shines the name of Jacob of Edessa (d. 708), the pre-eminent writer and poet who devoted much of his time to the study of peripatetic philosophy. His reputation and teachings, observes Renan, are "second to those of no other figure in Syriac literature" (131). At the monastery of Qennesrin, Jacob studied Greek thoroughly and distinguished himself as the "interpreter of books" by translating many Greek theological works. He was the first Syrian to use the Greek vowel points in the Syriac language, which he sought to restore to its natural purity. According to Bar Hebraeus, he was also well versed in Hebrew (132). To Jacob belongs the credit for pronouncing the first juristic opinion among the Syrians which made it lawful for Christian ecclesiastics to impart advanced instruction to children of Muslims (133).

Of Jacob's philosophical works, we have the translation of the *Categories*, which Renan observes is customarily joined with Athanasius of Balad's translation of the *Isagoge* of Porphyry. Jacob also is said to have translated the *De Interpretatione*, the *Analytica* and a short tract on the life of Aristotle (134). The best known of his own philosophical writings is the *Enchiridion* a treatise on the meaning of theological and philosophical terms such as "essence," "nature," "person," etc. (135).

Philosophy was further advanced by another distinguished student of Qennesrin, George, Bishop of the Arabs (d. 725). In 686 George was ordained a bishop for the Arab tribes of the Tay, the Tanukh, the 'Uqayl, the Taghlibite, the Tha'labites and the Arabs of Mesopotamia, with his episcopal seat at 'Aqula (al-Kufa). His philosophical translations are preserved in the British Museum MS. 14659, written in the eighth or ninth century, not in the

seventh century as claimed by Renan (136). This MS. contains the *Categories*, the *De Interpretatione*, and the *Analytica Priora* with introductions, notes, and commentaries on each of them. Renan seemed to be greatly fascinated by these works of Bishop George, and rightly calls them an "extraordinary monument of his expertness in logic" (137). The commentary, in Renan's opinion, is unequaled among those produced by the Syrians, if one considers the magnitude of the task and the painstaking method of exposition followed by the commentator. He adds that "no other commentary could be preferred to this one, no matter what part of the Syrians' philosophy other scholars may ever have considered worthy of publication" (138). However, one of the most noteworthy works of Bishop George is his disputation with the Arabs about the excellence of their poetry. When an Arab contended with Bishop George that poets of other nations could not be compared with Arab poets, the Bishop presented the Syrian poets as far greater (139).

In the period from the eighth to the thirteenth century, Aristotle was less widely translated and studied by Syrian scholars, because during the greater part of this period, and especially in the time of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mamun, they were engaged in translating books from Syriac and Greek into Arabic. Nevertheless, some Syrian writers continued to translate Greek works into Syriac. Famous among them is Moses bar Kipha (d. 903), Bishop of Barmes and Mosul, whose commentary on the *Dialectics of Aristotle* is cited by Bar Hebraeus (140). Another illustrious Syrian writer was Dionysius bar Salibi, Bishop of Amid (d. 1171), who has to his credit the writing of extensive commentaries on many works of Aristotle. The philosophical works of Bar Salibi are extant in the Cambridge MS. 2061, which contains his commentaries on logic, covering the *Isagoge*, the *Categories*, the *De Interpretatione* and the *Analytica*. He also wrote commentaries on other treatises of Aristotle, including the *Physiology* and the *Theology* (141).

In the thirteenth century, which saw the end of this period in Syriac literature, Bar Hebraeus was the luminary not only of his own age, but of all ages. His most extensive knowledge and the wide range of topics on which he wrote give him a rightful reputation as an encyclopedic scholar. Furthermore, no one would ever imagine that a high-ranking church dignitary of the thirteenth century would write such entertaining and amusing stories as did Bar Hebraeus.

The theory held mostly by Western writers that Bar Hebraeus was of Jewish descent lacks historical justification. Apparently, these writers are deceived by the form "Bar Hebraeus" (son of the Hebrew) which made them maintain that this Primate of the East was of a Hebrew origin. This, as shall be seen later, is groundless.

The first eastern writer to reject this theory was Rev. Louis Cheikho. In his lengthy biography of Bar Hebraeus which appeared in *Al-Mashriq* (Beirut, 1898), Cheikho criticizes the orientalist views on this subject and argues that the name itself is not convincing evidence that Bar Hebraeus was of Jewish origin. But he erroneously makes Bar Hebraeus the nephew of Michael the Great (d. 1199), Patriarch of Antioch. He probably confused Bar Hebraeus—whose ordination name was Gregorius and who by rank was a Maphrian—with the Maphrian Gregorius Jacob Qandasi (1189-1215), nephew of the Patriarch Michael the Great.

The first eastern writer who shed light on the origin of Bar Hebraeus was the Syrian Bishop Severus Aphram Barsoum (d. 1957), later Patriarch of Antioch. In his article "Hal Kana Gregorius ibn al-'Ibri min Jins Yahudi," *Al-Hikma* (Jerusalem, 1927), XI, 92-6 Barsoum rejects the interpretation of orientalist regarding the origin of Bar Hebraeus. He refers to Bar Hebraeus' lengthy autobiography in his *Ecclesiastical History* and notes that the author mentioned nothing about his "Jewish origin." Barsoum also refers to a metrical biography of Bar Hebraeus in the dodecasyllabic meter by his disciple Mar Disocorus Gabriel of Bartali (d. 1299), Metropolitan of Jazirat ibn Cumar. Two manuscripts of this biography survive, one in the village of Bartali near Mosul, Iraq, and the other one at the Bodleian Library MS. Marsh 74. In this latter MS.—a microfilm of which the present author acquired from the Bodleian Library—Bar Hebraeus' biographer states that "Bar Hebraeus was raised in a noble family; his father's name was the physician Deacon Aaron." According to Barsoum, if Bar Hebraeus'

father was a Jew converted to Christianity, his biographer would at least have alluded to his conversion. But we may conjecture that the theory that Bar Hebraeus was of Jewish descent dates back to Bar Hebraeus' lifetime. We read in Bar Hebraeus' *Anthology*, published by Michael Shababi in Rome, 1877, and republished by Rev. Yuhanna Dulabani in Jerusalem in 1929 the following two lines of verse (on p. 152)

If our Lord (Christ) called himself a Samaritan, Do not be ashamed if people call you Bar Hebraeus (son of a Jew). For the origin of this appellation is the river Euphrates and not a disgraceful doctrine or the Hebrew language.

We have it on the authority of Barsoum that he read in a commentary on Bar Hebraeus' *Anthology* in the private library of Abd al-Nur, Metropolitan of Diyarbakr, that Bar Hebraeus was born while his mother was crossing the river Euphrates on one of her journeys. Thus, he came to be called the son of *al-'Ibri* that is, of the one who crossed the Euphrates (the verb *I'bar* meaning "to cross").

Another explanation of the name of Bar Hebraeus is given by Mar Gregorius Paulos Behnam, Syrian Archbishop of Baghdad and lower Iraq. In his article titled "Ta 'qib Tarikhi fi Nasab al-'Allama Mar Gregorius ibn al-'Ibri" (Historical Investigation about the Descent of the Most learned Bar Hebraeus), *Al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya* (Damascus, November 1963) XIII, 146-148, he refers to the aforementioned article of Barsoum as well as to the *Anthology* of Bar Hebraeus and to his biography by Gabriel al-Bartali. But he adds that Bar Hebraeus was called by this name after a big village called 'Ibra in the province of Jubas not very far from Malatiya (Melitene). This village has been frequently mentioned by Bar Hebraeus in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Behnam tends to believe (basing his assumption on the two lines of verse in Bar Hebraeus' *Anthology*) that Bar Hebraeus' grandfather probably immigrated from his village 'Ibra to Malatiya and that the nickname "Son of the 'Ibri") or Bar Hebraeus was attached to the family.

Be that as it may, decisive proof is certainly lacking that Bar Hebraeus was of Jewish descent. That this nickname was known in Bar Hebraeus' lifetime is certain from the apologetic verse in his anthology. What makes the issue more puzzling is that no writer since Bar Hebraeus' time has produced any evidence that Bar Hebraeus was of Jewish descent. On the other hand deciding the origin of Bar Hebraeus solely on the basis of the name of his father "Aaron" or on his nickname "Bar Hebraeus is untenable. The name Aaron is popular among Christians and Muslims, while the nickname Bar Hebraeus does not necessarily mean "Son of a Jew." For the word *'Ibri* derives from the verb *I'bar* meaning "to cross" and Bar Hebraeus' explanation of the origin of his name is validated.

Bar Hebraeus' philosophical works are numerous. The famous *Book of the Pupil of the Eye* is a compendium of writings about logic or dialectics, with an introduction on the benefit of logic and seven chapters dealing with the *Isagoge* of Porphyry, the *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Analytica Priora*, *Topica*, *Analytica Posteriora* and *De Sophisticis Elenchis*. Another monumental work of Bar Hebraeus is the *Book of the Speech of Wisdom*, a compendium of dialectics, physics, and theology.

In addition, his large encyclopedia entitled *The Cream of Wisdom* contains the whole Aristotelian discipline. The first volume contains the *Isagoge*, the *Categories*, the *De Interpretatione*, the *Analytica Priora* and *Analytica Posteriora*, *Dialectics*, *De Sophisticis Elenchis*, *Rhetoric and Art of Poetry*. The second volume contains the eight treatises which comprise the *Physics*: *De Auscultatione Physica*, *De Caelo et Mundo*, *De Meteoris*, *De Generatione et Corruptione*, *De Fossilibus*, *De Plantis*, *De Animalibus*, and *De Anima*. In the two treatises of the third volume appear treatments of metaphysics, the origin of philosophy and philosophers, theology, ethics, economics, and politics (142).

Bar Hebraeus also translated into Syriac Ibn Sina's *Kitab al Isharat wa'l-Tanbihat* (*The Book of Indications and Prognostications*). In addition, he translated many medical books and wrote an Arabic commentary on the

Aphorisms of Hippocrates. He also translated an abridgment of Dioscorides' treatise *De Medicamentis Simplicibus*, and commented in Syriac upon the *Medical Questions of Hunayn b. Ishaq*. Furthermore, he is said to have written commentaries in Arabic on Galen's treatises *De Elernentis* and *De Temperamentis*. He also abridged in Arabic al-Ghafari's *Book of the Simples (al-Adwiya al-Mutrada)* and left unfinished the Syriac translation of Ibn Sina's *al-Qanun fi 'l-Tibb* (143).

Another writer of renown is Severus Jacob bar Shakko, Metropolitan of the monastery of Mar Matta, near Mosul. In his major work, *The Dialogue*, in two books, he discussed logic, the syllogism, the types and divisions of philosophy, and the philosophical life and conduct. He also devoted attention to metaphysics and theology (144).

A considerable part of the Syrians' philosophical study and writing concerned the soul. Their knowledge of this subject was derived largely from Aristotle, but tempered by their own Christian views. Sergius of Ras 'Ayn is credited with having translated into Syriac *The Book of Aristotle On the Soul*. This title is misleading, however, and the work is entirely different from Aristotle's treatise *De Anima* (145). Yet the Syrians had their own writings about the soul, of which the treatise *Man as a Microcosm*, by Ahudeme (see p. 217), is an example. About the end of the seventh century, John of Dara (d. 738) wrote a treatise on the soul, later incorporated into a similar work by another John of Dara (d. 860). Both these works are extant in MS. 3973 of the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

It is interesting to speculate on the work of another author from the same period, the Maronite Syrian Theophilus Bar Thomas of Edessa, who, according to Bar Hebraeus, translated from Greek into Syriac "the two books of the poet Homer on the Conquest of the City of Ilion" (146). These two books are apparently the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, though some writers believe the reference is to the first two books of the *Iliad*. No clear explanation of Theophilus' translation has yet been given, however, and some scholars reject Bar Hebraeus' testimony altogether (147).

The writing of history continued during this period, following the same chronological approach which had originated in the preceding period. Two important histories stand out. The first, that of Dionysius of Tal Mahre (d. 845), covers the whole period from the creation to his own time. The other one is the previously mentioned *Chronicle* of Michael the Great, Patriarch of Antioch, which likewise describes events from the creation to the lifetime of the author. This history, the product of careful and impartial research, was later completed by Bar Hebraeus.

Bar Hebraeus, the last major Syrian historian of far-reaching fame, wrote a universal history, the *Chronicon Syriacum* in three parts. The first part contains the history of the world from the creation to Bar Hebraeus' time. The second records the history of the patriarchs of the church of Antioch, to the year 1285. The last part of the work covers the history of the Eastern Church and the acts of its Catholici and Maphrians. This third part originally ended with the year 1286, but was continued by Bar Hebraeus' brother Barsoum al-Safi to the year 1288, and later by another writer to 1496 (148). During the last year of his life, Bar Hebraeus, at the request of some Muslim friends, produced an Arabic abridgment of his political history, titled *Tarikh Mukhtasar al-Duwal*. This version contains useful information on Christian and Muslim men of letters, philosophers, physicians, etc., which is not included in the original Syriac work.

Finally, Bar Hebraeus was the last great Syrian mystic. His mystical ideas are contained in his *Book of the Ethikon* and the *Book of the Dove*. Professor A. J. Wensinck in his *Bar Hebraeus' Book of the Dove Together with Some Chapters from His Ethikon* (Leyden, 1919) has produced an English translation of the *Book of the Dove* and some chapters of the *Book of the Ethikon* and thoroughly studied Bar Hebraeus' mysticism. He also showed the influence of the Muslim philosopher and mystic Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111) on Bar Hebraeus. However, Wensinck says nothing about the influence of Ibn Sina's mystical ideas on Bar Hebraeus which are

very conspicuous in his mystical ode *The Perfection* consisting of 305 lines which he composed in Baghdad in the year A.D. 1277 as well as in his ode *The Divine Wisdom*. Both of these odes are contained in Bar Hebraeus' Anthology published by Yuhanna Dulabani in 1929 at Jerusalem (149).

The discerning student of this period will perceive that the Syrians to some extent preserved their unity in the face of six centuries of Muslim domination, and even became, in philosophy, the masters of their conquerors. The gradual process by which Arabic replaced Syriac as the dominant spoken language, however, severely and irreparably reduced the audience to which Syrian authors might address themselves.

Although the translation of different books from Syriac and Greek into Arabic under the 'Abbasid Caliphs does not belong to Syriac literature, it throws light on the intellectual contribution of the Syrians to Islamic civilization. Without these translations, Muslim scholars from the ninth to the twelfth century would have had no access to Greek philosophy and sciences, and therefore the scholarly achievements of men like al-Kindi (d. 870) and al-Farabi (d. 951) would have been unlikely. Ya'qub b. Ishag al-Kindi was, to be sure, the first Arab philosopher and the most prolific of all philosophers of his time. Yet his knowledge of Syriac and Greek was extremely limited, and his studies were based mainly on Arabic translations from these languages. His role as interpreter is even more uncertain (150). Al-Farabi, too, owed his knowledge and training to two Syrian tutors, Yuhanna b. Haylan and Abu Yahya al-Marwazi (151).

It is not our intention to present every detail about the translation movement and its leaders, for this subject has been thoroughly discussed by other writers. Let it suffice to stress here some aspects of the translations made under the 'Abbasids, noting especially their value and their impact on Islamic civilization.

The Arabs' contact with the Syrians, which dates back to the pre-Islamic era, began in the two Arab kingdoms of Ghassan in Syria and the Lakhmites in al-Hira, in present day Iraq. Moreover, many Syrian physicians practiced medicine in Arabia before Islam, while Syrian missionaries carried the Gospel to different Arab tribes. Ahudeme (d. 575), who was first ordained bishop of Beth 'Arbaya, a district between Nisibin and Sinjar, converted a great number of Bedouin Arabs to Christianity. As a matter of fact, there were Syrian communities in Najran, Yemen and al-Madina (Yathrib). The Syrian church until this day has commemorated the first Church built in Yathrib, named for the Virgin Mary (152).

Although this Arab-Syrian relationship was not primarily an interchange of culture, it shows that the Arabs in their *Jahiliyya* [Pre-Islamic period] were not completely cut off from their Syrian neighbors. However, these two peoples became more closely linked after the Arab conquest of Syria and Persia in the first half of the seventh century. The new conquerors not only admired the civilization in Syria, but later applied themselves and made great use of it.

The first known translation from Syriac into Arabic was that of the four Gospels, made in 643, when John of the Sedras was Patriarch of Antioch. According to Bar Hebraeus, this translation was made by experts in both Arabic and Syriac from the Arab tribes of the banu Tay, Tanukh, and 'Uqayl, by order of 'Umayr b. Sa'd b. Abi Waqqas al-Ansari, governor of the Jazira under the Umayyads (153). Another translation of the Gospels was made by Hunayn b. Ishaq, working from the Syriac Septuagint version (154). Moreover, the *Kitab al-Din wa'l-Dawla*, by 'Ali b. Rabban al-Tabari (ca. 850), a Nestorian Christian convert to Islam, which has been published by Alphonse Mingana in Egypt in 1923, contains portions of the Old Testament in Arabic, but does not indicate by whom they were translated (155). In the period immediately following the Arab conquest of Syria and Persia, the conquerors were not concerned about knowledge or the translation of books into their tongue. They were fully engaged in establishing themselves in the vanquished countries. But the contact of the Arabs with the intellectual elements in Syria greatly stimulated the Arabs curiosity and desire for learning. It also opened for them new vistas of knowledge, mainly in the area of Greek philosophy and sciences, which had been studied and absorbed by the Syrians.

Under the Umayyads, the translation movement was insignificant; only a few medical books were translated from Greek and Coptic into Arabic at the order of Khalid b. Yazid b. Mu'awiya, who we are told was interested in medicine and alchemy. It was not until the time of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (753-775) that the activity of translation from Syriac and Greek into Arabic received momentum. Al-Mansur, who complained of a chronic stomach disorder, looked for a physician to treat him. Georgius (George) Bakhtyeshu, the chief physician of Gundishapor, was recommended, and the ailing Caliph immediately sent after him. Through Georgius' care, the Caliph regained his health and became greatly interested in having medical books translated into Arabic, to insure more proper treatment of himself and the people. Georgius at once undertook the task of making such translations (156), thus starting the tremendous activity which lasted until the twelfth century.

The succeeding 'Abbasid Caliphs followed the steps of al-Mansur by encouraging the translation of books. This work reached its peak under al-Ma'mun, who in 832 established the *Bayt al-Hikma*, a translation bureau, as well as a library where scholars could pursue their translations. This *Bayt al-Hikma* was headed by Yuhanna b. Masawayh (d. 857), under whom young Hunayn b. Ishaq was the most active translator. Twenty-five years later, when the Caliph al-Mutawakkil revived this school, he appointed Hunayn as its principal. During the first half of the ninth century translation was done mainly from Greek into Syriac, but during the second half of this century most translations were made into Arabic, while old translations were revised. Moreover, many wealthy and influential people followed the steps of their Caliphs by encouraging the translators. Prominent among these people were Ahmad and Muhammad, the sons of Mtisa binti Shakir, who spent great sums of money to acquire manuscripts and paid generously for translations (157).

Hunayn b. Ishaq was undoubtedly the most energetic and famous translator of the ninth century. In addition to his mother tongue, Syriac, he was well versed in Greek and Arabic. He may rightfully be considered the most prominent intellectual of his time, a man who contributed immensely to the learning of his age. He translated mostly from Greek into Syriac, and also revised translations made by others. At his death, Hunayn had translated into Syriac one hundred books by Galen, half of which he rendered into Arabic as well. He also translated most of the works of Hippocrates and Aristotle.

Hunayn was followed by two disciples, his son Ishaq and his nephew Hubaysh b. al-A'am. Ishaq (d. 910) did most of his translation into Arabic, and also undertook to revise the work of his father and other translators. Since he had been raised in Baghdad, Ishaq mastered the Arabic language more completely than his father. He is credited with having translated most of Aristotle's works into Arabic.

Another eminent translator was Thabit b. Qurra (d. 901), a Syrian Sabian from Harran. Thabit knew Arabic, Syriac, and Greek, and translated many books on medicine, mathematics, astrology, as well as some of Aristotle's works.

In the tenth century, Yahya b. 'Adi (d. 974) stands as a distinguished Syrian philosopher (158), logician and translator. Born at Takrit, he later moved to Baghdad and studied under the Nestorian Abu Bishr Matta b. Yunis (d. 940) and the eminent philosopher Abu Nasr al-Farabi. Beside numerous Arabic writings, Yahya translated from Syriac into Arabic Aristotle's *Categories*, *Topics*, and *Sophistici Elenchi*, the *Law* and *Timaeus* of Plato, the *Meteorology* of Theophrastus, and many other Greek works (159).

Some prominent translators who succeeded Yahya b. 'Adi were Abu al-Khayr al-Hasan b. al-Khammar, Abu 'Ali Ishaq b. Zur'a (d. 1008) and Abu al-Faraj 'Abd Allah b. al-Tayyib (d. 1043) and Yahya b. Isa b. Jazla (d. 1100) (160). Besides these translations of Greek sciences, the Syrians translated and composed works in Arabic, chiefly apologies and interpretations of Christian dogma (161).

The Arabic translators from Syriac and Greek were, generally speaking, faithful. Despite some vagueness in rendering Greek scientific terms which they could not understand, they were meticulous in transmitting the spirit

and the meaning of the author. In order to achieve maximum fidelity and precision, they translated a single book several times and compared previous translations with the original Greek. A contemporary writer who has studied the manuscripts containing the Arabic translations of Aristotle's logic confirms that these translations are quite clear and precise, except in some places where misunderstanding of technical terms has made their quality inconsistent (162). Translations were usually provided with commentaries and marginal notes to clarify the text. As Meyerhof affirms, these Syrians were not merely translators, but learned men with profound philosophical knowledge. Most of the translators who headed the schools (or "hospitals", sing. *Bimaristan*) carried the title of *Hakim* (sage), *Faylasuf* (philosopher) or *Mantigi* (logician) (163). This latter title was particularly attributed to Abu Bishr Matta, Yahya b. 'Adi, and his disciple Abti Sulayman al-Sijistani. The successors of these men were usually called "the distinguished physicians in the philosophical sciences" (164).

These translations, together with others from Persian and Pahlevi, had a tremendous impact on Islamic civilization. In fact, they caused a radical intellectual and cultural revolution, unprecedented in the history of civilization, comparable to that caused by the Renaissance in Europe, in the fifteenth century. As has been formerly shown, the Arabs, since the emergence of Islam, and throughout the whole Umayyad period, concerned themselves with the study of the Qur'an and with the religious sciences such as *fiqh*, *hadith* and *kalam*. They knew nothing about the different sciences, such as medicine, mathematics, philosophy, chemistry, etc., which they called '*Ulum al-'Awa'il*' ("The Sciences of the Ancients") in contradistinction to '*Ulum al-Arab*' ("The Sciences of the Arabs") (165). The following quotation, from a contemporary writer, puts the effect of the Arabic translations into its proper perspective:

Beside their major function of translation, these translators have rendered tremendous service to the Arab mind. They were motivated by their desire for disseminating knowledge to compile many works on various topics, such as medicine, natural sciences, chemistry, astrology, mathematics, and philosophy. Their writings kindled the first spark of intellectual studies in the Islamic World. These compilations were, in a sense, compendiums which would provide the reader with a general idea about the scientific knowledge of that time. These writings, which helped facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, were followed by profoundly specialized studies made later by the Muslims in their different schools (166).

One of the results of the Muslim contact with the translated knowledge of the ancients was the prevalence of gnosticism among the early Muslim sects. The gnostic spirit crept into mysticism and may have affected the Isma'ili theory of the "infallible Imam." In his article, referred to in the note above, Goldziher has clearly demonstrated the impact of ancient knowledge on the Islamic mind.

The sciences of philology, prosody and grammar were affected primarily by philosophy and logic. In fact, the grammarians of Basra were called "the foremost for using logical terms in grammar." Again the study of philosophy of *Ikhwan al-Safa'* ("The Brethren of Sincerity"), indicates that the philosophy of these Brethren was greatly effected by Greek philosophy; moreover, the doctrine of the Mu'tazila was deeply imbued with Greek philosophy.

Through these translated works, the Arabic language adopted many scientific and philosophical terms previously unknown. One can imagine the great difficulty which the translator faced in finding similar Arabic terms or inventing new ones. However, many Greek terms were translated into Arabic and have been part of its vocabulary until this day, such as, *Ustura*, *Isfani*, *Usturlab*, *Inbiq*, *Balgham*, *Tiryag* and hundreds of other words.

But the most important effect of the translation of ancient science was the transformation of a once primitive desert people into a civilized people who, like other nations, contributed much to world civilization.

Syriac Literature After Bar Hebraeus

The second period of Syriac literature, which had culminated in the writings of Bar Hebraeus, came to an end with the death of this illustrious man in 1286. From that time onward, Syriac Literature became largely a thing of the past, the dwindling expression of a once predominant national culture. As Arabic came into wider use, many Syrian writers either wrote in it or translated into it Syriac books, mainly religious works, for the use of their congregations. Yet Arabic did not cross the Taurus mountains, and therefore the Syriac-speaking community in what is now Turkey retained its language and traditions. Likewise, the Eastern Syrian communities of northern Persia and Urmia were able to preserve their national identity. Despite the predominance of Arabic, Syrian writers continued their literary work in their native language, but their themes and topics were far too limited, confined to purely religious compositions and recapitulations of past works.

In fact, the whole period from the fall of Baghdad before the Mongols (1258) to the nineteenth century may be considered an era of lamentable cultural stagnation throughout the Middle East. The decline of Syriac literature, therefore, is no mere isolated instance of cultural weakness. The period, generally speaking, has been overlooked by writers on Syriac literature, except for Baumstark, who has mentioned a few fifteenth-century writers and their works. The first systematic study of this period was made by Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, the Syrian patriarch of Antioch and all the East in his book *al-Lu'lu' al-Manthur*, which lists the names and works of fifty-six writers, translators and poets of the late period.

The predominant literary activity of this period, until the nineteenth century, was the composition of liturgies, practiced by almost every one of these fifty-six writers at one time or another. This liturgical literature began with Barsoum al-Safi (d. 1307), brother of Bar Hebraeus, who shortened the liturgy of St. James. He also completed the biography of his brother and catalogued all his works and continued his *Chronicon Syriacum* until his own time.

Apart from the liturgical writings, other literary activity also exists. Bar Wuhayb, who was also called Zakhe (d. 1333), may be mentioned as the composer of a Syriac treatise entitled *al-Mawad*, containing an explanation of the Syriac alphabet, which is subject to the rules of diacritical points. His contemporary, the priest Yeshu' bar Khayrun of Hah (d. 1335), in Tur 'Abdin, wrote a commentary on the *Lexicon* of Bar Bahlul. He also composed many songs, some of which described the calamities which befell the church in his time.

The writings of Daniel of Mardin (d. 1382), commonly called Ibn al-Hattab, show the influence of Arabic on Syriac writings (167). Ibn al-Hattab stands as one of the most prominent writers of the period. In 1356 he went to Egypt, where for seventeen years he studied Arabic literature, logic, and philosophy. Upon returning to his own country, he composed in Arabic a treatise entitled *Usul al-Din (The Principles of Religion)*, abridged Bar Hebraeus' grammar (*Semhe*), and wrote commentaries on Bar Hebraeus' *The Cream of Wisdom*; a treatise on the exposition of the Nicene Creed is also attributed to him (168).

The most valuable historical writings from this period are those of the priest 'Addai of Basibrina (d. 1502). To him belongs the credit for having extended both the *Chronicon Syriacum* and the *Chronography* of Bar Hebraeus from 1288 to 1496. He also composed three historical tracts—an account of the invasion of Diyarbakr, another work on Tamerlane's destruction of Tur 'Abdin, and a chronology of historical events from 1349 to 1492—all of which have been published in the original language (169).

Another prominent writer of the period is the Patriarch Nu'h the Lebanese (d. 1509). Nuh was born a Maronite but later joined the Syrian Orthodox Church and was elevated to the Patriarchal throne in 1493. He is particularly remembered for the many poems he composed describing the tyranny of the Kurdish governors and other rulers. He also wrote a short historical tract (170).

In theological writing, the most eminent name is that of the Maphrian Shamoun (d. 1740); born and raised in Tur 'Abdin, he was ordained to his position in 1710. His time was characterized by the continuous atrocities of the Kurds, who pillaged the Syrian churches and monasteries. His almost legendary resistance to the Kurds ended only with his sordid assassination by 'Abdul, the Kurdish chief, on April 6, 1740. Despite the turmoil and harassment of his time, Shamoun found time to concentrate on some writing. His works include a 317-page theological treatise on the Trinity, the Procession of the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation, the Nativity of our Lord, a refutation of the Purgatory, the end of time, and the world to come. He also composed a treatise entitled *The Chariot of Mysteries*, dealing with many theological subjects, and another entitled *Silah al-Din wa Turs al-Yaqin*, which he later translated into Arabic. He also produced an anthology and a compendium of the *Lexicon* of Bar Bahlul (171).

Also deserving of mention here is the chorepiscopus Jacob of Qutrubul (d. 1783), who composed a comprehensive work of Syriac morphology entitled *Zahr al-Ma'arif* in 1763. The Bishop Gurjis (George) of Azekh (d. 1847) composed a poem with seven-syllabic lines, describing the invasion of Muhammad Pasha of Rawanduz against his town and the neighboring districts.

The chorepiscopus Matta Konat of Malabar (d. 1927) is credited with the translation of many Syriac works into the Malayalam language of Malabar. Among these translations are chapters of the commentary of Bar Salibi on the Gospels, the *Nomocanon [Ecclesiastical Laws]* of Bar Hebraeus, the book of prayers for regular week days, along with the Orders of baptism, funerals, matrimony and Passion Week (172).

The most important figures of this period are Na'um Fa'iq of Diyarbakr (d. 1930), who wrote several Syriac works and translated parts of the *Ruba'iyyat* of 'Umar al-Khayyam into Syriac (173), and the priest Jacob of Bartali (d. 1931), who studied Syriac under the Chaldean priest Butrus of Karmlays and composed many poems, of which the one called *The Divine Wisdom* is of enduring literary beauty (174).

Looking back on this final period of Syriac literature, we see no Bar Daysan or St. Ephraim, no Jacob of Edessa or Bar Hebraeus. We see instead the lamentable, but nonetheless real, decline of a once lofty national culture. The Syrians' literary efforts were, from the outset, bound up with their unified existence. In the centuries after their acceptance of Christianity, the expression of their unity through pagan writings continued to exist along with a similar, growing self-expression through Christian literature. Even under the Muslims' domination, their unity did not falter, but actually reinforced itself through their literature. At the same time, however, the decline of their language, together with their intensive devotion to the work of translation, permanently altered the course of their culture.

This final period of Syriac literature, then, represents the logical extension of an already established pattern. Although the Syrians were (and are) capable of independent literary creation, their constant subjection to external influence has greatly reduced the scale on which that creation may take place. If it is unrealistic to expect the Syrians again to equal the literature of centuries long past, it is worse to ignore the beauty of that literature, or to disdain the culture it has so long preserved.

Matti Moosa's

Studies in Syriac Literature

Footnotes

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1-See J. B. Chabot. *La Litterature Syriacque* (Paris, 1935), pp. 9-10. Chabot also refers to H. Omont, *Inventaire de la Collection renaudot a la Bibliotheque Nationale*. See also, by the same author, *Les Langues et la Litterature Arameenne* (Paris, 1910), translated into Arabic by Anton Shukri Lawrence (Jerusalem, 1930), p. 5.

2-William Wright, *Syriac Literature* (London, 1894), p. 141.

3-Wright, p.74.

4-*The Repentance of Ninevah, by Ephraim Syrus*. Trans. By Rev. Henry Burgess (London, 1853), Introduction, pp. 20-21. According to Burgess, Ephraim says that "God gives forgiveness, a word concerning which there can be no difference." Yet Assemani renders the sentence "Indulgentiam adjecit, id est, Clavium potestatem" ("He adds indulgence, that is the 'power of the the keys.'")

5-Loc. cit., p.21.

6-Viscount Philip de Tarrazi, *Asdag ma kan an Tarikh lubnan (The Most True Account of the History of Lebanon)*, in Arabic (Beirut, 1948), I, 432.

7-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 74, mentions one anaphora by Philoxenus of Mabug, but refers us to Renaudot, II, 310, and to Assemani, B.O., II, 24. He also cites Renaudot as the source of this information in his *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscript in the British Museum*.

8-Rubens Duval, *La Litterature Syriacque* (Paris, 1899), p. 13.

9-Ernest Renan, *Histoire des langues semitiques*, p. 259.

10-Bar Daysan, *Laws of the Countries*, ed. Williams Cureton (London, 1855), p.15.

11-Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, ed. Paul Bedjan (Paris, 1890), p. 168.

15-Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, *al-LuLu al-Manthur (Histoire des Sciences et de la Litterature Syriacque)* Arabic, 2nd edition (Aleppo, 1956), p. 237.

16-*Ibid.*

17-Martin Sprengling, "Antonius Rhetor on Versification," *American Journal of Semitic languages and Literature*, XXXII, 3 (April, 1916), p. 139.

18-See Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literature* (Bonn, 1922), p.11.

19- See the preface of William Cureton to his *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London, 1855).

20-For an English translation of the Pshitto see George M. Lamsa *Holy Bible from the Peshitta* (Philadelphia, 1957). This translation appeared for the first time in 1933.

21-William Wright, *Syriac Literature* (London, 1894), p. 5.

22-F. Crawford Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London, 1904), p. 70.

23-Anton baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literature*, p.18.

24-Burkitt, pp. 39-78.

25-E. Nestle, "Syriac Versions," *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, XI (1958), 126.

26-*Ibid.*

27-Paul E. Kahle, *The Cairo Geniza*, (Oxford, 1959), p. 265.

28-Nestle, p. 127.

29-Kahle, pp. 265-283.

30-F. Crawford Burkitt, *Evangelion da Mephareshe* (Cambridge, 1904), II, 201.

31-Kahle, p. 265.

32-Kahle, pp. 265-267.

33-John Pinkerton, "The Origin and Early History of the Syriac Pentateuch," in *J.T.S.*, XV (1914), 14-41.

34-Kahle, p. 266.

35-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, pp. 39-78 *passim*.

36-Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I, xiii.

37-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, pp. 71-72.

38-Joseph Marquart, *Osteuropaische und ostasiatische Streifzuge* (Leipzig, 1903), p.288, quoted by Kahle, p. 270.

39-According to Josephus (*Antiquities*, XX, ii, 1, 4), Izates II, King of Adiabene, son Monobazas I, and his sister Helena, had been won over to the Jewish religion. A Jewish merchant named Ananias (Hannania) had been admitted to the Royal court and harem, where he was able to interest the royal ladies in the Jewish religion.

- 40-Kahle, p. 274, quoting Marquart, p. 298. 41-Kahle, p. 274, quoting Adolph Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentum* (4th ed., 1924), p. 284.
- 42-Kahle, p. 275.
- 43-For the Syriac text and English translation of the Doctrine of Addai, see William Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London, 184), pp. 24-35.
- 44-Kahle, pp. 282-283.
- 45-Addai Scher, *Tarikh Kaldo wa Athur*, II, 6.
- 46-See Duval, *La Litterature Syriaque* (Paris, 1899), p. 32.
- 47-Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, II, 279.
- 48-*Ibid.*, II, 468.
- 49-The Anonymous Chronicle of Edessa, ed. Rahmani, p. 66, cited by Rev. P. Behnam, "Ta qibat Tarikhiyya," *Lisan al-Mashriq* (May-July, 1951), p. 271.
- 50-For full statement of Solomon of Basra see (Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents*)
- 51-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, p. 32.
- 52-Kahle, p. 283.
- 53-Michael the Great, *Chronicle*, pp. 283-285, quoted by Rev. P. Behnam, "Ta qibat Tarikhiyya," p. 271.
- 54-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, p. 32.
- 55-Cureton *Ancient Syriac Documents*, p. 162.
- 56-F. C. Burkitt, "The Diatessaron and Early Syriac Versions," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1950), 517.
- 57-According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1950), XXI, 834, his heresy "was that of the Encratites. Their main doctrines were the evil nature of matter, an absolute forbidding of marriage, abstinence from wine and perhaps from meat."
- 58-Barsoum, *al-LuLu al-Manthur* (Syria, 1956), p. 630.
- 59-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 8.
- 60-The full text of St. Aphraim's commentary on the *Diatessaron* was discovered and published recently with a Latin translation and French by Leloir. See *St. Ephrem, Commentaire De L' Evangile Concordance Syriaque*, texte edite et transmit par Don Louis Leloir (Dublin, 1963).
- 61-Ignatius Jacob III, "Al-Kitab al-Maqaddas fi al-Kanisa al-Suryaniya," *al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya*, I (Damascus: September, 1962), 67.
- 62-Addai Scher, *Tarikh Kaldo wa Athur*, II, 19.

63-William Cureton, *Remains of a Very Ancient Recension of the Four Gospels in Syriac* (London, 1858).

64-Robert C. Bensley, J. Rendel Harris and F. Crawford Burkitt, *The Four Gospels in Syriac*, transcribed from the Sinaitic Palimpsest, intro. By Agnes Smith Lewis (Cambridge, 1894).

65-Edgar Goodspeed, "The Canons of the New Testament," *The Interpreter's Bible* (1952) I, 68.

66-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 13.

67-Barsoum, *Al-Lulu al-Manthur*, p. 57.

68-Wright, p. 16.

69-Wright, p. 17.

70-William Wright, "Syriac Literature," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1887), vol. XXIV.

71-Bar Daysan was born in 154 A.D., in a place near Edessa on the River Daysan (for which he was named). He was a Babylonian by origin, or according to another theory, from Adiabene. His parents, Nuhana and Nahshayrem, escaped from their country in the fifteenth year of the reign of the Persian King Shahrûq, the son of Narsay, and settled in Edessa. There Bar Daysan was raised in the palace of King Manu VIII (139-179); hence, he must have been of noble origin. He studied both Syriac and Greek and was converted to Christianity by Oshtasab, the bishop of Edessa. He was ordained a deacon and probably a priest as well. Perhaps he was the person who convinced the Edessan King Abgar IX (179-214) to become a Christian, for they had been close friends from their younger days. Bar Daysan died in 222. For information about his life, see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, xxx; Michael the Great, *Chronicle*, ed. J. B. Chabot (Paris, 1899-1918), p. 110; Duval, *La Littérature Syriaque*, pp. 241-248; Addai Scher, II, 20-21; and Barsoum, *al-Lulu al-Manthur* (2nd editions), p. 238.

72-William Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (London, 1855), preface.

73-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, pp. 158-159.

74-*Ibid*, pp. 158-159.

75-Antonius is believed to be the emperor Marcus Antonius Aurelius. Yet there is no indication in the original Syriac text that the treatise was addressed to this emperor. See Cureton, *op. cit.*, preface.

76-Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical*, IV, xxx.

77-Severus Jacob, *Tarikh al-Kanisa al-Suryaniyya al-Antakiyya (History of the Syrian Church of Antioch)*, Arabic (Beirut, 1953), I, 129.

78-Martin Sprengling, "Antonius Rhetor on Versification," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature*, XXXII, 3 (April, 1916), appendix I.

79-P. D. Gabriele Crdahi (*Liber Thesauri de Arte poetica Syrorum*, p. 12) gives the following short poem by St. Ephraim against Daysan:

"He whom you see named Bar Daysan
is more appropriately named than the name of Daysan

a river near Edessa which Bar Daysan apparently was named after.
For this one the River Daysan
was not flooded with thorns and tares, of which Bar Daysan was full."

80-Michel le Syrian, ed. J. B. Chabot, p. 110.

81-Bar Hebraeus, *Tarikh Mukhtsar al-Duwal (Compendious History of Dynasties)*, Arabic, ed. A. Salhani (Beirut, 1890), p. 125.

82-Duval, p. 234.

83-*Ibid.*, p. 247.

84-Ahmad Amin, *Fajr al-Islam*, Arabic (Cairo, 1928), I, 156.

85-Duval, *La Litterature Syriaque*, pp. 75-77; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, pp.

33-39; Addai Scher, *Tarikh Kaldo wa Athur*, II, 46-47.

86-Baumstark, *Geschichte der Syrischen Literature*, p. 42.

87-Wright, p. 35; Baumstark, p. 44.

88-See Gregory Nyssa, "In praise of St. Ephraim," *al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya*, I, II, III (Hims, Syria, 1939).

89-Wright, p. 33; Addai Scher, II, 47.

90-Burkitt, p. 178.

91-Sprengling, p. 149.

92-Burkitt, *Eastern Christianity*, p. 96.

93-*Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

94-Duval, p. 21. 71

95-Ephraim Syrus, *The Repentance of Nineveh*, trans. Rev. Henry Burgess (London, 1853), II, preface, p. 13.

96-T. J. De Boer, *The History of Philosophy In Islam*, trans. Edward R. Jones (London, 1961), p. 11.

97-Ernest Renan, *De Philosophia Peripatetica apud Syros* (Paris, 1852), p. I. 98.

98- Jurji Zaydan, *Tarikh al-Tamaddun al-Islami* (Cairo, 1904), III, 132.

99-*Ibid.*

100-Renan, p. 4.

101-Renan, Chapter I, *passim*.

102-Philip K. Hitti, *History of Syria* (New York, 1951), pp. 251-261.

103-Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum*, pp. 72-74.

104-*Ibid.*, pp. 72-4.

105-Max Meyerhof, *Von Alexandrien nach Baghdad*, trans. into Arabic by Dr. Adb al-Rahman Badawi, in *Al-Turath al-Yunani fi al-Hadara al-Islamiyya* (Cairo, 1940), p. 38.

106-Meyerhof, p. 52.

107-Zaydan, III, 128.

108-William Wright, *Catalogue*, III, 731-33.

109-Baumstark, pp. 101-102.

110-Severus Jacob, *Tarikh al-Kanisa al-Suryaniyya al-Antakiyya* (Beirut, 1957), II, 34-5.

111-Renan, p. 12.

112-*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

113-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 48.

114-J. S. Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, III, I, 85, note cited by Renan, p. 14.

115-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 50. 116-Baumstark, p. 254.

117-Duval, p. 15.

118-Renan, p. 15.

119-*Ibid.*, p. 25.

120-Duval, pp. 255-256, quoting Victor Ryssel, *Über den textkritischen wert der Syrischen Übersetzungen der Klassiker* (Leipzig, 1880).

121-Ibn Abi Usaybia, *Uyūm al-Anba* (Beirut, 1957), II, 173.

122-G. P. Behnam, *al-Falsafa al-Masha Iyya fi Tarikhina al-Fikri* (Mosul, 1958), pp. 12-14.

123-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 138.

124-Duval, pp. 278-279.

125-Wright, *Catalogue*, III, 1189.

126-For the *Acts of Martyrs*, see William Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (London, 1864). See also John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, ed. E. W. Brooks in the *Patrologia Orientalis*, ed. R. Graffin and F. Nau (Paris, 1923-26), XVII, XVIII and XIX.

127-Wright, *Catalogue*, III, pp. 1070-1153.

128-*The Third Part of the Ecclesiastical History of John of Ephesus* was edited and published at Oxford in 1853 by William Cureton. See also J. P. N. Land, *Joannes, Bischof von Ephesos, der erste Syrische Kirchenhistoriker* (Leiden, 1856). In 1860 R. Payne Smith translated Cureton's Syriac edition of the history of John of Ephesus into English and published it at Oxford. In 1862 the same was translated into German by J. M. Schonfelder and published at Munich. Fragments of the second part of the *Ecclesiastical History* were published by Land in part ii of his *Anecdota Syriaca* at Leiden, 1868. Finally, extracts from the *Ecclesiastical History* were edited by Jessie Payne Margoliouth and published at Leiden, 1909.

129-Duval, p. 187-223.

130-*Ibid.*, pp. 351-52.

131-Renan, p. 34.

132-Bar Hebraeus, *Tarikh Mukhtsar al-Duwal*, p. 51.

133-De Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, trans. Edward R. Jones (London: Luzac and Co, 1903; republished New York; Dover Publ. Inc., 1967), p. 15.

134-Renan, p. 32.

135-Wright, *Catalogue*, II, 984.

136-Cf. Renan, p. 33, and Wright, *Catalogue*, III, 1163.

137-Renan, p. 33.

138-*Ibid.*, pp. 34.

139-*Ibid.*, p. 33.

140-Duval, p. 259; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, pp. 210-11.

141-Ignatius Aphram Barsoum, *al-LuLu al-Manthur*, p. 482.

142-Renan, pp. 65-67; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, pp. 269-70; Duval, pp. 261-62; Baumstark, pp. 316-317.

143-For the complete list of the works of Bar Hebraeus, see E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus* (Oxford, 1932).

144-Wright, *Catalogue*, II, 1165.

145-Renan, p. 28; Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 91.

146-Bar Hebraeus, *Dynasties*, p. 41. Cf. Renan, pp. 49-50.

147-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, p. 164.

148-Wright, *Syriac Literature*, pp. 276-79.

149-The ode *Divine Wisdom* was translated into Arabic and published with elaborate commentary by Archbishop Paulos Behnam in *Lisan al-Mashriq* (Mosul, 1950). It was republished with the Syriac text in Syria in 1965 in Archbishop Behnam's *Ibn al-Ibri al-Shair (Bar Hebraeus the poet)*.

150-Ignatius Jacob III, "al-Kindi wa al-Suryaniyya," *al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya* (January, 1963), pp. 255-267. See also Meyerhof, p. 60.

151-Meyerhof, pp. 62-63.

152-For a detailed analysis of the missionary activity of the Syrian Church in Arabia, see Louis Cheikho, *al-Nasraniyya wa Adabuha bayn Arab al-jahiliyya* (Beirut, 1912), part I.

153-Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, I, 275.

154-Barsoum, *al-LuLu al-Manthur*, p. 77.

155-*Ibid.*

156-Ibn Abi Usaybia *Uyun al-Anba* (Beirut, 1956), II, 37-41.

157-Al-Qifti, *Tarikh al-Hukama*, ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903).

158-Meyerhof, p. 60, is incorrect in calling Yahya an Arab.

159-For a detailed description of the works and life of Yahya b. Adi, see Augustine Perier, *Yahya ibn Adi* (Paris, 1920).

160-See Ibn Abi Usaybia, *Uyan al-Anba* for a detailed description of the lives and works of the different translators.

161-The most comprehensive work on the Syrian Christian literature written in Arabic is Georg Graf, *Geschichte der Christlichen Arabischen Literatur* (Vatican City, 1944 and 1960).

162-Khalil Georr, *Les Categories d'Aristotle dans leurs Versions Syro-arabes* (Beirut, 1948), pp. 182-200.

163-Meyerhof, pp. 72-78.

164-*Ibid.*

165-For a through analysis of the *Sciences of the Ancients (Ulum al-Awa'il)*, see Ignaz Goldziher, "Stellung der alten islamischen Orthodoxie zu den antiken Wissenschaften" in *Abhandlungen der Koniglichen Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, VIII (Berlin, 1916), translated into Arabic by Abd al-Rahman Badawi in *al-Turath al-Yunani fi al-Haddara al-Islamiya*, (Cairo, 1947), pp. 123-172.

166-Ibrahim Madkur, *L'Organon d'Aristotle dans le monde Arabe* (Paris, 1934), p. 47.

167-Graf, pp. 281-284.

168-*Ibid.*

169-Barsoum, p. 546.

170-*Ibid.*, pp. 565-66.

171-For the biography and works of Maphrian Shamoun, see *al-Majalla al-Patriarchiyya*, VI (1938), 23-30.

172-Barsoum, p. 581.

173-Murad Chiqqi, *Naum Faiq* (Jerusalem, 1936), pp. 300-4.

174-Barsoum, p. 528.
